Opera avanti a Dio! Religion and Opera in Liberal Italy from Unification to the First World War

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A note on the citation of primary sources: the original Italian of primary sources not previously published are given in Appendix 1 where citations are more than 50 words.

Abstract

‘Opera avanti a Dio! Religion and Opera in Liberal Italy from Unification to the First World War’

Against the background of the evolving confrontation between the Catholic Church and the new state, religion in opera in Liberal Italy took on a new significance, both in new works and the revival of operas from earlier in the nineteenth century. Focusing on repertoire reflecting Catholic settings and theology, this thesis offers a fresh argument about the consistency of religious tropes and their significance in the political, cultural and social trends of Liberal Italy. It sets the treatment and reception of religious themes in opera in three contrasting urban contexts – the fascination with the supernatural in the positivist, intellectual centre of Turin, the culture war between competing visions of society and the purpose of art in Venice, and the confrontation between Papal Rome and the growing new capital city.

Two thematic chapters consider how the adaptation of source texts in this period tended to augment religious themes, often emphasising conventional and orthodox religious views, and examine a series of musical and dramaturgical examples of the operatic markers of religion, which represented religious tropes including liturgical scenes, prayers and visions of the celestial and infernal, to suggest how little these changed in comparison to the broader musical style in this period.

It challenges existing assumptions in several ways, including highlighting the continuing role of censorship until the mid-1890s. However, the Catholic social revival and the realignment of clerical and conservative political forces during the 1890s supported a broader, positive reading of religious tropes in opera. Analysis of archival sources, the daily and Catholic press, show that by 1900, even Puccini’s *Tosca*, supposedly the most anticlerical opera according to many musicologists, was read sympathetically by Catholic opinion. Before the First World War, the arrival on Italian stages of Wagner's *Parsifal* saw liberal and Catholic opinion compete to praise its specifically Catholic qualities and Italian heritage.

List of Tables and Images

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Turin, February 2019

In Loving Memory of

Alan Holden (29.09.42-28.05.18)
Jeffrey Tate (27.04.42-02.06.17)
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Introduction

The first half century of the new Kingdom of Italy, after its foundation in 1861, was dominated by three fundamental questions of nation-building, bequeathed by the Risorgimento, which preoccupied early generations of statesmen. First, the perceived imperative to construct a sense of Italian citizenship and nationhood from its bewildering inheritance of local, regional and transnational cultures and histories; second, the need to modernise the economy to compete as a major European power, and attempt to integrate the more prosperous and industrialising northern regions with the semi-feudal south; and finally resolving the religious question of the institutional power of the Catholic Church, its control of charity and education across the peninsula, and its wider social influence in a society of overwhelmingly Catholic adherence.

These questions can all be seen reflected in debates about the condition and future of Italian art, literature and music, including opera, during this period. The economic travails, and social and demographic trends of the first decades of the new nation, accelerated the decay of the model of opera-going inherited from the pre-unification period, which had been dominated by aristocratic elites and court theatres. The publishing houses of Ricordi and later Sonzogno became the principal mediators of public tastes, the diviners of the commercial potential of new operas, and the filter for the importation of foreign repertoire. The emergence of repertory opera which could reliably support opera's economic model both calcified public expectations and narrowed the opportunities for emerging composers and stylistic innovation.[1]

The direction of artistic trends was often seen as evidence of the problems the country faced in seeking to mould a new national Italian identity. For Francesco De Sanctis (1817-1883), Minister of Public Instruction in successive Liberal governments after 1860 and pioneering historian of Italian literature, his fellow countrymen’s predilection for music over literature was a manifestation of insincerity,

[1] John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984) pp. 165-177.

born of an inheritance of religious hypocrisy which required an exterior cover for internal vacuity: "Melodrama and musical drama are the popular genre, where scenery, mimicry, song and music work on the imagination far more powerfully than an insipid word, a vacuous sonority, which has turned into a mere supplement."[2] Other leading figures of the Risorgimento generation saw the role of music in the new Italy in a more positive light. Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810-1861), Prime Minister of Piedmont and briefly also of the new Kingdom of Italy, recognised that the tradition and pervasiveness of music in Italian culture meant the need for a "national music" could not be ignored.[3] Yet, looking to the future, a reinvigoration of the *bel canto* tradition of Italian operatic art which could embody a modern sense of *italianità*, in the face of the influence of German and French opera, became a key field of controversy for music critics and the intellectual class after unification. Giuseppe Mazzini, in *La Filosofia della Musica* (1846) had prefigured this debate, arguing that Italian music was mired in materialism, while German music was consumed by mysticism. Through their fusion, he proclaimed "musical expression will distil these two fundamental concepts: individuality and the idea of the universe – God and man."[4]

This thesis directly addresses opera's intersection with the third of these key national dilemmas – the religious question. It will argue that conditions in Liberal Italy, a country of overwhelmingly Catholic adherence, but with a political and intellectual class heavily influenced by positivist attitudes and anticlerical sentiment, actively fostered opera's renewed attention to the dramatic potential of religious themes. This trend had already started in the 1830s, and was not restricted by any means to Italy, but operatic convention and social and political controls limited the opportunities for directly referencing religion in the dramaturgy and music of secular opera until the

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[2] "Per ciò fra tanta letteratura accademica il melodramma o il dramma musicale è il genere popolare, dove lo scenario, la mimica, il canto e la musica opera sull'immaginazione ben più potentemente che la parola insipida, vacua sonorità, rimasta semplice accessorio." Francesco De Sanctis, *La Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996) p. 615.
[3] Quoted in Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006) pp. 13-14. I review later in this chapter the ongoing debate about the political meaning of opera during the Risorgimento in the context of a consideration of the reception of religious themes by opera audiences.
[4] "l'espressione musicale riassumerà I due termini fondamentali: l'individualità e il pensiero dell'universo, Dio e l'uomo." Giuseppe Mazzini, *La Filosofia della Musica* (Firenze: Guaraldi, 1977) pp.100-101.

liberalisation of censorship. The final four decades of the century witnessed an increasingly pervasive use of religion depicting both its material, devotional and ritual forms, and, as importantly, its metaphysical and supernatural manifestations. Indeed the relationship between these two realms of religious reference, the material and the supernatural, formed a crucial aspect of how new operatic styles developed, and how they were understood by audiences living through a period of rapid social change in which the place of religion in public life was a central question.[5]

In exploring how 'real' and 'metaphysical' religious worlds were envisioned in opera in this period I trace in particular how recognisable forms of music, which Carolyn Abbate terms 'phenomenal song', and in a broader sense types of 'stage music', were repurposed by successive generations of composers in a variety of operatic styles, and to what extent this religious music, for example liturgical forms, chant or prayers, were incorporated into the composers' musical idiom.[6] The breadth of religious reference in opera during this period is such that some focus is appropriate. This study principally pays particular attention to the dramatisation of Biblical and Christian narratives, rituals and piety, and visions of the celestial and infernal in a Christian and particularly Catholic theological setting. Non-Christian contexts provided further frameworks through which religious themes could be explored, notably in operas such as Verdi's *Aida*, Jules Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore* or Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*.[7]

The relationship between religion and secular drama forms a particularly rich and fluid field of study within the history of western music. As Gary Tomlinson argued in his landmark essay *Metaphysical Song*, opera has always been an apt social space

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[5] I take a pragmatic approach to my scope within the time period 'from unification to the First World War', recognising that the composition and reception history of many important works straddle the decade between the first and final phases of unification. Italy entered the War in 1915 but 1914, the 'Parsifal Year', acts as a more significant concluding milestone, except for the inclusion of Puccini's *Suor Angelica*, premiered after the War, to address its relationship with the repertoire of the giovane scuola.

[6] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the 19th Century* (Princeton: PUP, 1992).

[7] For discussion of the religious character of the music in *Aida*, see particularly W.A Hermann, 'Religion in the operas of Giuseppe Verdi' (unpublished PhD thesis: Columbia University, 1966); Julian Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 3* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) p. 174; Ralph P. Locke, 'Beyond the Exotic: How Eastern is Aida?', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 105–139.

for elite society's engagement with the metaphysical through the material performance of music and song.[8] While opera's emergence at the end of the sixteenth century was driven by artistic trends in the secular courts of Florence and other city states in Italy, across Europe religious dramas had a much longer history, and sacred dramas (both staged and unstaged) flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 'Sacred opera', *azione sacre*, or oratorio, on subjects drawn from the Bible and Christian martyrdom, were given in a variety of staged formats, particularly at times of the Christian calendar when secular oratorio might be prohibited. In places where it became a specialised genre, for example in Rome during Lent, the first opera performances projected a clear spiritual message, or used hagiographic subjects like Stefano Landi's *Sant'Alessio* (1631).[9] While the subject matter and production of secular and religious dramas might be clearly demarcated, musical styles showed little distinction. Local context was clearly the most significant influence on the designation of a work as oratorio, opera or other nomenclature. Giacomo Rossini referred to his own *Mosé in Egitto* (1818) as both an opera and an oratorio. Simon Mayr (1763-1845), a German composer who lived in Bergamo from 1802 until his death, later wrote that the distinction between oratorio and opera rested on whether the poetry and music were sincerely motivated by religious sentiment.[10]

While religious oratorio not intended for theatrical staging continued to flourish in the nineteenth century, religious themes began to become more prominent within opera during the course of the nineteenth century as the predominantly classical and mythological subjects on which *opera seria* had focused gave way to Romantic melodrama. A number of distinct but overlapping developments within operatic styles all contributed to this abundance of religious material in operas performed in Italy the period between 1840 and 1870. The first of these was the influence of French *grand opéra*. As Gloria Staffieri has argued the *grand opéra* model of contrasting public and private conflicts, in which religious division and sublimity were prominent, offered

[8] Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: PUP, 1999) p. 4.
[9] Robert Letellier, *The Bible in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) pp. 16, 20; Howard E. Smither, *The History of the Oratorio vol. 4: The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: UNCP, 2000) p. 56.
[10] Rosenberg, 'Religion and Opera', p. 733.

Italian composers and audiences opportunities for dramatic innovation which chimed with aspirations for Italian art, not least in Mazzini's *Filosofia*.[11] Fromenthal Halévy's *La Juive* (1835) interpolated a Te Deum ceremony and addressed religious toleration and Jewish identity. Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831) established tropes of diabolical character and temptation which were highly influential with later composers. In *Les Huguenots* (1836) and *Le Prophète* (1849) he interpolated versions of Lutheran hymn tunes to depict counter-reformation religious violence. In *I Puritani* by Vincenzo Bellini (1835) and *Les Martyrs* (1840) and *La Favorite* (1840) by Gaetano Donizetti, romantic misfortune was coloured by the intensity of religious devotion.[12] In Italy these *grand opéra* tropes were developed further by Verdi, whose *Nabucco* (1842) *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (1843) and *Giovanna D'Arco* (1845) all negotiated regulatory controls to realise the dramatic potential of Biblical stories, Christian heroism and stoicism. For the most part these operas imported recognisable musical structures into number operas – for example prayer form arias and hymnal choruses – which could suggest an ecclesiastical or ethereal sound-world. Often this satisfied a demand for local colour, as well as establishing and contrasting group identity, even if the sources of some of these colouristic devices, for example hymn tunes, had no claim to historical veracity in the context of the story being enacted.[13]

A further source for heightened religious colouring of Italian opera in this period came from the literary flourishing of the Catholic revival, epitomised by Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (1827), and analysed by De Sanctis in 1870 as the Catholic-Liberal school (*scuola cattolico-liberale*). The consistent quality which De Sanctis identifies in this body of religiously-inspired texts encompassing Manzoni, Tommaso Grossi and Massimo D'Azeglio, was a religious philosophy of

[11] Gloria Staffieri, *Musicare la storia: il giovane Verdi e il grand opéra* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 2017) pp. 7-17.
[12] Donizetti's *Les Martyrs* was originally conceived for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, but King Ferdinand refused its production, leading Donizetti to rework most of the material for the Paris Opera. William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) pp. 418-9. Its final return in an Italian form as *Poliuto* in Bergamo in 1850 saw it produced across Italy as one of the most popular revived works of the 'primo ottocento' with a religious theme. Conversely, Bellini's *I Puritani* was commissioned and premiered at the Théâtre-Italien to an Italian libretto.
[13] Gerhard, *The Urbanisation of Opera*, pp. 165-168.

mansuetudine – meekness and endurance – in the face of personal trials and political oppression, and in contrast to the 'democratic' school expounded by Mazzini to whom action and resistance were the route to national and spiritual liberation. As Jonathan Lee Cheskin has revealed, these texts formed a significant body of sources which furnished composers with libretti for dozens of operas during the Risorgimento period.[14] While the most prominent of these composers, Amilcare Ponchielli and Errico Petrella (who both set libretti based on *I promessi sposi*) could compete with Verdi's popularity during the 1850s and 1860s, none of these works were maintained in the repertory in the decades after Italian unification. Verdi generally looked to foreign sources for his libretti, but one obvious exception was *I Lombardi* taken by Temistocle Solera from the epic poem by Grossi. In *I Lombardi* can be found a more energetic and political strain of catholic-liberalism which chimed with the neo-guelph writings of Vincenzo Gioberti who advocated the achievement of Italy's national mission under the Pope. As it also exhibited to contemporaries Verdi's influence from *grand opéra* models including Meyerbeer, Rossini and Donizetti, we can see that how rich and diverse were the ingredients of religious operatic material already by the mid-century.[15] If Verdi never whole-heartedly adopted a Catholic-Liberal vocabulary, the influence of the mode of *mansuetudine* can be traced throughout his career, particularly in the characterisation of female piety and resignation.[16]

Meanwhile, Wagner's juxtaposition of Christian and pagan myth in *Tannhäuser* (1845) and *Lohengrin* (1850) made Christian virtues such as repentance, forgiveness and redemption central to its musical and dramaturgical language, though the first Italian premiere of any Wagner opera had to wait until 1871 when

[14] Jonathan Lee Cheskin, Catholic-Liberal Opera: outline of a hidden musical romanticism (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Chicago, 1999) pp. 7-18.
[15] Staffieri, *Musicare la storia*, pp. 203-210.
[16] Cheskin, Catholic-Liberal Opera, pp. 402-450; see also Hermann, 'Religion in the operas of Giuseppe Verdi' for a broader discussion of the innovations and variety of Verdi's uses of religion throughout his career and in relation to his sacred music and personal beliefs. Anselm Gerhard characterises this depiction of female piety in romantic opera as the 'retreat of the princess', as aristocratic *prime donne* gave way to more bourgeois models reflecting ideals of female religiosity within the widening opera-going middle classes. See Gerhard, *The Urbanisation of Opera* (Chicago: UCP, 1998) pp. 105-110, 180.

Lohengrin was staged at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna.[17] By this time, Meyerbeer's *grand opéras* had already enjoyed a period of popularity which often matched even Verdi.[18] Though the staging requirements taxed even the best resourced theatres through three decades from 1860 Italy saw over 260 productions of his six mature operas, mostly following the composer's death in 1864, which was shortly before the premiere of his final opera *L'Africaine*.[19] Two years before Meyerbeer's death Milan's La Scala gave the Italian premiere of Charles Gounod's *Faust* which would prove possibly the most popular opera in Italy during the period of Liberal Italy. These influences heralded new directions for the use of religious themes in operas written in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The roughly fifty year period after Unification is a span which encompasses two Italian premieres both given in Rome. The first, of Verdi's *La forza del destino*, was given at the Teatro Apollo in 1863 while Rome was still under Papal rule, under the censored title of *Don Alvaro*. The second was *Il Trittico* by Giacomo Puccini, which opened in 1919 in the theatre which superseded the Apollo as Rome's *teatro massimo*, the Teatro Costanzi.[20] These works (focusing only on the middle panel of Puccini's tryptich, *Suor Angelica*), give one measure of the evolution of opera's representation of religious themes in this period. With *La forza del destino* Verdi heightened a religious atmosphere and foregrounded a cloistered setting which had been briefly glimpsed in *Il Trovatore*. Puccini's convent envelops the stage-world before presenting a miracle scene in which reality and the supernatural collide to an effect which has remained a point of dispute and controversy. In between these

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[17] Letellier, *The Bible in Music*, pp. 20, 91-92; Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy*, pp. 234-237.

[18] Anna Tedesco, *'Opera a Macchina': La fortuna di Giacomo Meyerbeer in Italia dal 1840 al 1870* (Tesi di dottorato: Università di Bologna, 1999). Meyerbeer's early career had included a period in Italy between 1816 and 1824 when he produced six operas which already suggested how his musical style would diverge from existing models like Rossini. Few of them were revived locally and none entered the repertoire. Letellier, *An Introduction to the dramatic works of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008). For an alternative insight into Meyerbeer's influence in Italy, see Michael Wittmann and Stewart Spencer, 'Meyerbeer and Mercadante? The Reception of Meyerbeer in Italy', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Jul., 1993), pp. 115-132.

[19] Tedesco, Il Grand Opéra e i teatri italiani: un caso emblematico 'Il Profeta a Parma 28 dicembre 1853, *Musica e storia*, XI/I, 2003, p. 141.

[20] It is noteworthy that both these operas were commissioned for production abroad, *La forza del destino* in St Petersburg and *Il Trittico* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

poles, Verdi's late operas, particularly *Don Carlos* and *Otello*, continued to deploy religious music and atmosphere to new effect. As well as the multiplying production reception of Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* in Italy, Jules Massenet's operas were also taken up enthusiastically, in which he developed new models of female religiosity in both naturalist and exoticist settings, particularly *Manon*, *Herodiade*, *Thais* and *Werther*.[21] To underline quite how extensive and diverse opera's engagement with religion had become by the turn of the twentieth century, we can take a snapshot of the repertoire encountered by audiences including both repertoire works and new operas. At the Teatro Costanzi in Rome in 1904, the programme included the following operas:

[21] For the political and religious significance of *Hérodiade* and *Thaïs* in their French context, see Clair Rowden, Republican Morality and Catholic Tradition in the Opera*: Massenet's Hérodiade* and *Thaïs* (Lucie Galland, 2004). The Milanese reception of Massenet's operas has been analysed in detail by Matthew Martin Franke, The Impact of Jules Massenet's operas in Milan 1893-1903 (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2014).

Fig. 1 Repertoire at Teatro Costanzi, Rome 1904

Composer	**Opera**	**Religious themes/music**	**Year of premiere**
Wagner	Tristano e Isotta (7)		
Verdi	Un ballo in maschera (5)		
Puccini	*Tosca (15)*	Papal Rome Liturgy religious bigotry	1900
Ponchielli	*La Gioconda (15)*	The rosary/malediction Use of organ	1876
Wagner	*Lohengrin (8)*	Holy Grail legend Faith and doubt Use of organ	1850
Mancinelli	*Ero e Leandro (6)*		
Verdi	*Falstaff (5)*		
Mancinelli	*Isaias (1)*	Biblical cantata	1887
Donizetti	*Lucrezia Borgia (4)*		
Perosi	*Stabat Mater/ (4)* *Il giudizio universale*	Religious oratorio	1904
Meyerbeer	*Gli ugonotti (2)*	Religious persecution Lutheran chorale	1836
Donizetti	*Poliuto (2)*	Christian martyrdom	1850

Two years earlier in Turin, the heartland of positivist and anticlerical ideas in Liberal Italy, across the many theatres offering opera, we see an equally striking range of religious themes, drawing on repertoire from throughout the previous century:

Fig. 2 Selection of repertoire in Turin theatres[22]

Composer	**Opera**	**Religious themes/music**	**Year of premiere**
Gounod	*Faust*	Angelic choir The Devil Transfiguration	1859
Verdi	*La Traviata*	Female piety	1851
Puccini	*Tosca*	Papal Rome Liturgy religious bigotry	1900
Verdi	*Il Trovatore*	Taking the veil Use of Miserere	1853
Donizetti	*La Favorita*	Monastic calling	1840
Cordara	*La tentazione di Gesú*	Jesus and Satan Angelic choir	1902
Garlaschi	*Don Bosco Fanciullo*[23]	Early life of the priest and religious teacher	1902
Boito	*Mefistofele*	Staging celestial vision Transfiguration Heavenly choirs	1875

Religion in opera also provides a lens for viewing the quest for a new musical language to sustain Italian opera in the face of foreign competition and embody a

[22] Giorgio Rampone, *Musica e Spettacolo a Torino fra Otto e Novecento* (Turin: Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, 2009) p.72. Among a total of 29 productions listed for this year, 15 have significant religious themes.

[23] Giovanni Bosco, known as Don Bosco, was a prominent Catholic priest and teacher in Piedmont, who had died in 1888. Apart from his pedagogical writings and missionary work in South America, he was a particularly outspoken critic of the policies of religious toleration towards Protestant and Jewish communities followed by the piedmontese regime in the 1850s. He was beatified (1929) and canonised (1934) by Pope Pius XI. Attilio Garlaschi's 'bozzetto melodrammatico' was not warmly greeted in the Turin press, which considered it infantile. *La Stampa*, 14 December 1902.

sense of *italianità* for the new Italy. As Wagner's ideas and gradually his operas exerted an influence on musical discourse and styles, the generation known as the *Scapigliati* (the 'dishevelled') sought to challenge the conventions of Italian opera. Their influences, as well as Wagner, included Goethe and E.T.A. Hoffmann, and led them to explore the potential of the fantastical and supernatural which could fuse Germanic influences with Italian tradition in what Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol calls "un fantastico 'mediterraneo' alternativo".[24] The leading example of this school was Arrigo Boito's ambitious adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, *Mefistofele*, initially a failure on its premiere in 1868, but in its revised version of 1875 a national and international triumph.[25] The weight of expectation on the generation of composers who followed Verdi was keenly felt. Among them, Alberto Franchetti absorbed similar influences from Germany and France and sought new operatic models which deployed religious tropes in a variety of settings, the fantastical in *Asrael* (1888), the epic in *Cristoforo Colombo* (1891) and later the primitive, decadent atmosphere of *La Figlia di Iorio* (1906), all with varying but waning degrees of success.

Inescapably in this period we need to weigh the significance of the movement known as *verismo* in Italian opera. Associated primarily with the emergence of the generation of composers born in the 1850s and 1860s known as the 'young Italian school' (*giovane scuola*), definitions of *verismo* opera have been fluid and its parameters shady, generating a substantial literature on its literary roots and musical and dramaturgical characteristics. Operatic *verismo* came to signify a more or less capacious set of tropes including plebeian settings, sensationalist plots, prominent violence and a pessimistic worldview. *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni is generally considered the *locus classicus* of the genre, as well as its first significant example. Subsequently it has been defined as narrowly as the rash of slice-of-life dramas typified by *Cavalleria* and copied endlessly in the twenty years afterwards, and as broadly as Italian opera written during this period, so that Puccini is sometimes considered as the most successful composer of *verismo* opera (at least

[24] Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, *Musica e Letteratura in Italia tra ottocento e novecento* (Milano: Sansoni, 2000) p. 169.
[25] See Emanuele D'Angelo (ed.), *Arrigo Boito: Il Primo Mefistofele* (Venice: Marsilio, 2013); Jay Nicolaisen has charted the ways in which Boito altered his score in its second version. Jay Nicolaisen, 'The First *Mefistofele*', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1978), pp. 221-232.

against certain criteria), despite only small proportion of his stage works conforming to stricter definitions of the *verismo* style. Its innovations are generally considered to be inspired by other forms of artistic movements in Italy and France variously titled naturalism, realism or verism, aspects of which could also be traced in earlier operas including Verdi's *La Traviata* and Bizet's *Carmen*.

More recently, scholars have sought to question assumptions about its contemporary meaning and application. Guarnieri Corazzol has traced the links between operatic 'verismo' and other genres of 'verism', particularly the literary 'verismo' of Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana, focusing on the parallels in their approach to narration, text and structure.[26] Andreas Giger's archaeology of the use of the term 'verismo', in different artistic contexts throughout the nineteenth century, repositions it more as a relative term to connote the disavowal of the conventions of Romantic melodrama established in the earlier part of the century – the abandonment of poetic meter for prose libretti, a parlando idiom of singing and musical dialogue predominating over lyrical closed numbers and long melodic lines.[27] Arman Schwartz prefers to focus on the non-musical innovations of *verismo* composition to see the use of bells and other non-orchestral sources of sound as descriptive of a progressive moment prefiguring modernism and futurism.[28] This thesis will examine in more detail how operas, including the three different adaptations of the *Cavalleria* story, Puccini's *Tosca* and Franco Alfano's *Risurrezione*, which encompass the full range of 'veristic' settings which this generation of composers tried out, approached the question of importing recognisable religious musical themes into their compositional style, and how Italian audiences and critics responded to them.

To return to the question set out at the opening, to what extent can these themes be read in the context of the confrontation between the Church and State in Liberal Italy, and the resurgent Catholic revival towards the end of the century? A number of

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[26] Guarnieri Corazzol, 'Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation' (trans. Roger Parker), *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1993) pp. 39-53.
[27] Andreas Giger, 'Verismo: Origin, corruption and redemption of an operatic term', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 60 no. 2 (Summer 2007) pp. 271-315.
[28] Arman Schwartz, 'Rough Music: Tosca and *Verismo* reconsidered', *19th-Century Music*, vol. 31 no. 3 (Spring 2008) pp. 228-244.

scholars have suggested particular resonances between operatic trends and the religious question in Italy. Susan Rutherford illuminates how models of female piety evolved through Verdi's operas.[29] Other studies have suggested particularly biographical approaches, for example about Verdi and Puccini's evolving attitudes to religion, notably Herrmann.[30] Roger Parker and Laura Basini have highlighted in different ways how earlier images of Verdi as an anticlerical scourge have underplayed his indebtedness to a training and ethical framework rooted in the tradition of sacred music and a Manzonian religious outlook.[31] David Rosen points directly to Puccini's more benign view of religion evident in his operas after 1900 to argue for a historical mapping of his operas against the contours of the religious controversy in Liberal Italy, questions which this thesis addresses.[32]

The relationship between Church and State is easily construed in adversarial terms. In 1874 Pope Pius IX issued the *Non expedit* which forbad Catholics from participating in national elections. Municipal political engagement remained legitimate and provided a proxy electoral terrain in which the confrontation between supporters of the Church and the new Liberal elite could be waged. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, largely in response to the anticlerical policies of Francesco Crispi's administration which had launched a fresh assault on the Church's influence through religious education in schools, symbols and public religious festivals. As will be discussed in chapters IV and V, the impact of these policies added fuel to the fire of the existing culture war between radical secularists and Catholic supporters and sympathisers, though moves towards a conciliatory policy by Crispi heralded a gradual re-alliance of conservative and religious forces to combat the perceived threat from Socialism.[33] *Rerum Novarum* itself addressed the

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[29] Susan Rutherford, *Verdi, Women Opera*, pp. 67-85.
[30] William Albert Hermann, 'Religion in the operas of Giuseppe Verdi' (University of Columbia: unpublished PhD thesis, 1963) pp. 28-61.
[31] Roger Parker, 'One priest, one candle, one cross', *The Opera Quarterly*, vol. 12, Issue 1, 1 October 1995, pp. 27–34; Laura Basini, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism in post-Unification Italy', *19th Century Music*, vol. 28 no. 2 (Fall 2004) pp. 133-159.
[32] David Rosen, "'Pigri ed obesi Dei': Religion in the Operas of Puccini", in *Madama Butterfly: l'orientalismo di fine secolo, l'approccio pucciniano, la ricezione, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi Lucca—Torre del Lago 28-30 maggio 2004*, Arthur Groos and Virgilio Bernardoni (eds.) (Florence: Olschki, 2008), pp. 257-98.
[33] A.C. Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia: Dalla unificazione agli anni settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977) pp. 63-84; Giovanni Spadolini, Giovanni Spadolini, *Le Due Rome* (Firenze: Le

social question and the condition of modern society, while rejecting the moral direction of modernism. It stimulated a new phase in the widespread Catholic revival by promoting a model of social Catholicism which redirected pastoral activity towards welfare work which led directly to the powerful Catholic institutions of the Opera dei Congressi and Christian democracy.[34]

One example, to date unremarked in the historical or musicological literature, highlights how this religious revival might have met the widening audience for opera at the turn of the twentieth century. Outside religious institutions, conservative elites saw the opportunities which this religious revival provided to support modern systems of production. Most famously, the industrialist Alessandro Rossi in the Veneto, put religious values and observation at the heart of a model of paternalism in his wool-making business.[35] As well as encouraging devotional habits among his workers at Schio, near Vicenza, the cultural amenities of the burgeoning *nuovo quartiere operaio* included the eventual construction of the Teatro Civico by his nephew, Barone Alessandro Rossi, which opened in 1909 with a production of Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele*, chosen specifically for its ambitious staging. *Mefistofele* could hardly be described as innovative in 1909 and in larger theatres its revival now prompted *ennui* among critics. Yet its religious themes and resolution would certainly have been consistent with the Catholic outlook of Schio's patron. Margherita is redeemed for her sins (fornication and infanticide) which would have been familiar risks to the female workforce of the textile mills, as she is transported to Heaven. Faust is also redeemed and a chorus of angels emphasises the final triumph of heavenly grace and forgiveness. The choice was praised by Ricordi's periodical *Ars e Labor* for the scope it provided to demonstrate the theatre's technical qualities, and in which strong contrast between the natural and supernatural was evidently thought fitting, an allegory perhaps for the intimate relationship between the spiritual and the temporal which Rossi's model of proletarian religious community represented:

Monnier, 1974) pp.349-378; *L'Opposizione Laica nell'Italia moderna (1861-1922)* (Firenze: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1988) pp. 2-20; *L'Opposizione cattolica* (Milano: Mondadori, 1994).

[34] Helena Dawes, 'The Catholic Church and the Woman Question: Catholic Feminism in Italy in the early 1900s', *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 97, no. 3 (July 2011), pp. 484-526.

[35] Alice A. Kelikian, 'The Church and Catholicism' in Adrian Lyttleton ed., *Liberal and Fascist Italy* (Oxford: OUP, 2002) pp.50-53; Raffaele Romanelli, *L'Italia liberale 1861-1900* (Bologna: Mulino, 1979) pp.324-338.

Boito's masterpiece with its great variety and contrast of scenes, outdoor and intimate, transcendental and naturalistic, are well made to test the innovative acoustics of the theatre, from far upstage to the proscenium. On the ethereal plane, where celestial choirs sing Hosannas, and the dark caves where witches cackle, the tumultuous ramparts, the silent laboratory, the squalid prison cell, the Grecian garden, all find in Schio's theatre a most worthy resonance and the most suitable setting, resulting in a production which will certainly prove memorable.[36]

[36] "… il capolavoro Boitiano con la sua grande varietà e disparità di quadri, aperti e intimi, trascendentali e veristici, ben poté mettere a tutta prova la qualità acustiche, quelle prospettiche, quelle di sfondo e quelle del cornice del teatro stesso. Epperò il lembo etereo, ove osannano le falangi celesti, e gli antri cupi ove ridano le streghe, I bastioni tumultuosi , il laboratorio silente, il carcere squallido, l'ellenico giardino ebbero nel teatro di Schio la più giusta risonanza e la più adeguata cornice, determinando un spettacolo che… resterà memorabile." 'Il Nuovissimo Teatro Civico di Schio', *Ars e Labor*, 1909, 15 July, pp.508-509.

Fig. 3 'Il Nuovissimo Teatro Civico di Schio'[37]

[37] *Ars e Labor*, 1909, 15 July, p. 508.

One of the central questions which this thesis poses is how audiences understood and interpreted religious themes in opera. Here it is useful to draw some parallels with the political agency ascribed to opera during the nineteenth century and the vexed debate about Verdi's role in the Risorgimento. This gained mythic proportions in the years after unification, and was perpetuated in the twentieth century by misinterpretation of a small number of cases, notoriously the reception of the chorus 'Va pensiero' from *Nabucco* at the opera's premiere in 1842.[38] Carlotta Sorba, Philip Gossett and Douglas Ipson among others have maintained that, despite such exaggerations, the political intentions of librettists and composers, represented principally but not exclusively in Verdi's output from *Nabucco* to *La Battaglia di Legnano*, can be read through both their political statements and textual and musical strategies, revealing explicitly or implicitly risorgimentalist sentiments which sought to confound censorial control. They argue that these meanings are also reflected in their impact on audiences, especially during the heady days of 1848.[39] To this group should be added Staffieri's more recent analysis of the reception and influence of French grand opera on national and patriotic themes in Verdi's output during the 1840s.[40] Roger Parker and others have questioned the interpretation and weight placed on many of these examples, citing contrary examples exhibiting an absence of liberal political readings by authorities and audiences.[41] More nuanced positions have been established by Peter Stamatov, and most recently Mary Ann Smart, that acknowledge opera's potential for political engagement among a diversity of contemporary responses, and a more diffuse relationship between opera and the

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[38] Roger Parker, '"Va pensiero" and the Insidious Mastery of Song' in *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton: PUP, 1997) p. 33.
[39] Carlotta Sorba, *Teatri: L'Italia del melodrama nel'età del Risorgimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001) pp. 190-225; Philip Gossett, 'Becoming a citizen: The chorus in "Risorgimento" opera', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Mar., 1990) pp. 41-64; '"Edizione distrutte" and the significance of opera choruses during the Risorgimento' in Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman (eds.), *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu* (Cambridge: CUP, 207) pp. 181-242.
[40] Gloria Staffieri, *Musicare la storia: il giovane Verdi e il grand opéra* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 2017).
[41] Parker, *"Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati": The Verdian patriotic chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 1997); '"Va pensiero"', pp. 20-41; 'Verdi Politico: A wounded cliché regroups', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 17, 2012, no. 4, pp. 427-436; Mary Ann Smart, 'A Stroll in the Piazza and a Night at the Opera', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 36 no. 4, Spring 2006, pp. 621-627; Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy* (London: Routledge, 2008) p. 224.

wider intellectual climate.[42] Cheskin's surfacing of the importance of the Catholic-Liberal school of literature offers an important correction to the focus on the political message which might be read through opera, particularly when *giobertian* sentiment was at its height before Pius IX's renunciation of liberalism.[43]

If the idea of Romantic melodrama having a direct political impact during the Risorgimento needs to be treated with extreme caution, what effect on audiences' sense of piety, scepticism or fidelity to the Catholic Church, might be measurable from the seeping of religion into opera? The poet Giacomo Leopardi, whose thinking had greatly influenced De Sanctis, had bemoaned the passivity of opera audiences, and seen a direct connection with its subjection from the pulpit, perhaps reflecting his self-confessed imperviousness to theatrical effect.[44] Jesse Rosenberg even goes so far as to posit the question whether effects such as a 'distancing' of on-stage religious prayers in nineteenth century opera actually encouraged a process of secularisation, as opposed to secularisation influencing how religion was depicted in opera.[45] Yet, there seems little evidence for such an effect. To speak of audiences in homogenous terms, as much reception history of opera does, should certainly immediately raise questions for historians. Scholarship on opera in Liberal Italy has focused most on the critical reception of repertoire, artists and impresarios, and the rivalry between Ricordi and Sonzogno. Musicologists have also been prey to 'first-night syndrome' in reception studies. The copious evidence available conveniently about opening nights, often endlessly recycled, and their reception by correspondents of national daily papers and specialist periodicals, has often coloured the subsequent image of the reception of important works, for example the opening of *Tosca* at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome in January 1900. However, if we consider a more nuanced interpretation of audience reception as suggested by Stamatov and Smart, specific to local, social and intellectual context, we can see

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[42] Peter Stamatov, 'Interpretive Activism and the Political Uses of Verdi's Operas in the 1840s' *American Sociological Review*, vol. 67, no. 3 (June, 2002), pp. 345-366; Smart, 'How political were Verdi's operas? Metaphors of progress in *I Lombardi alla prima crociata',* Journal of Modern Italian Studies (2013) vol. 18, no. 2 pp.190-204; *Waiting for Verdi: Opera and political opinion in nineteenth-century Italy 1815-1848* (Oakland: UCP, 2018).
[43] Cheskin, 'Catholic-Liberal Opera', p. 18.
[44] Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians 1860-1920* (Chicago: UCP, 2007) pp. 14-15.
[45] Rosenberg, 'Religion', p. 739.

religion in opera as a crucial way in which the Italian public engaged with the contemporary question of the place of religion in society. Inevitably I still rely predominantly on the mediation of audience reception through professional critics and notable public figures, but by surveying the spectrum of critical opinion across the daily press from clerical to liberal and radical publications, contrasting also 'higher-brow' criticism with reception in the popular press, it is possible to set the horizon of expectation of readers more clearly.[46]

As Sorba has written, "it is as problematical to speak in the singular about an Italian theatre public as of an Italian aristocracy, bourgeoisie, or lower class".[47] Yet both contemporary observers and later scholars have struggled to reconcile thin or conflicting evidence about audience attitudes to theatrical performance and its meaning, particularly when filtered through the inevitably biased reactions of composers, librettists and publishers. The exchange of symbolism between Romantic opera and Risorgimento street politics has been noted again by Sorba.[48] Language like "fanatismo" which in the early part of the century was used to indicate an enthusiasm bordering on the ecstatic and religious, was commonly used in relation to opera.[49] This suggests a deep emotional engagement. How audience reception evolved throughout the century, as the theatre-going public who experienced staged opera expanded, is an important consideration. John Rosselli concurs that, contrary to Leopardi, the primo ottocento audience was highly attentive and educated, "following note by note", but by the turn of the twentieth century newer competing entertainments rendered opera-going little more than a spectator sport.[50] Yet beyond critical reports of warmer or colder reactions to operas, singers or individual scenes and numbers, what do they tell us about the increasing infusion of religious elements, musical, textual and dramaturgical in operas?

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[46] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, p. 8
[47] Sorba, 'To Please the Public: Composers and Audiences in Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 36, No. 4, Opera and Society: Part II (Spring, 2006), pp. 598-599.
[48] Sorba, 'Ernani Hats: Italian Opera as a Repertoire of Political Symbols during the Risorgimento' in Fulcher (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011) pp. 428-51.
[49] Sorba, 'To Please the Public', p. 606.
[50] Rosselli, *Music and Musicians in Nineteenth Century Italy*, pp. 150-152.

Contemporary responses indicate an intense engagement with theatrical experience coloured by religious atmosphere. Critic Benedetto Bermani, writing in 1846, observed that religion was one of four essential components of serious opera.[51] In *La Moda*, Carlo Tenca opined of Verdi's two recent operas that "even love itself must connect to something more exalted that surpasses vulgar complaceny, as occurs in *Nabbuco* and *I Lombardi*, where it is elevated by religious exaltation".[52] Verdi's setting of an Italianised version of the 'Ave Maria' as a *preghiera* for Giselda in *I Lombardi* evinced contrasting responses to its religious authenticity. Retitled 'Salve Maria' to satisfy the pedantic censors, the aria failed to convince the agent and founder of *L'Arpa*, Raffaele Vitali, that the setting of the words of the prayer was appropriate: "a musical thought so sweet, so tranquil, so rich in affecting modulations, that distances it from any idea of profane song."[53] The Bolognese critic Enrico Panzacchi recalled with rapt enthusiasm, writing in the year of Wagner's death in 1883, the Italian premiere of *Lohengrin*, conducted by Angelo Mariani in 1871:

> And look, Angelo Mariani has climbed on to his conductor's podium; slowly turns his handsome head to left and right… enters into the prelude with the orchestra… a choir of angels slowly descends from the heavens and restores to earth the miraculous chalice in which the Saviour blessed the wine during the last supper with the Apostles. [54]

What is particularly noticeable about this description is the seamless transition from the reportage style with which Mariani's own performance as conductor is witnessed, to the painting of the stage picture of the realisation of the angel descending from the heavens with the Holy Grail, paraphrasing Wagner's own lengthy description of the meaning of the music of the prelude. As we will see later, Verdi was highly sceptical of Arrigo Boito's depiction of Heaven in the prelude of his opera *Mefistofele*. In

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[51] The others being fatherland, love and suffering ("patria, amore, religione, dolore"), Benedetto Bermani, *Schizzi sulla vita e sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* ((Milan: Ricordi, 1848) quoted in Smart, 'How political were Verdi's operas', p. 199.
[52] Tenca was an intimate of Clara Maffei's salon. *La Moda* vol. 8, 15 February 1843, quoted in Ibid., p. 198.
[53] Quoted in Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women*, p. 74.
[54] Enrico Panzacchi, *Wagner: ricordi e memorie* (Bologna: Zanicchelli, 1883) p. 65-66.

Venice audiences flocked to see depictions of heaven and hell in Franchetti's *Asrael*, motivated, it was suggested both by wonder and ridicule. By 1914 when Wagner's *Parsifal* took Italy by storm, even a radical newspaper like the Venetian *L'Adriatico* could report that the audience listened to the prelude with a "silenzio religioso". Catholic responses to *Parsifal* in 1914 suggest a belief in its spiritual and evangelical potential which had been entirely absent in the reception of religious themes only a generation before, when the Church was still advocating control of religious and ecclesiastical themes on stage.

The role of censorship is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis. Several scholars have detailed how the *primo ottecento* censorship, in various manifestations across the peninsula, involved strict pre-authorisation of libretti which limited almost any direct references to Christian religion, and themes or characterisations which could be taken as politically subversive or immoral. The *grand opéras* imported from Paris, for example were reclothed in locales distanced from a Catholic setting and with religious scenes and text excised so that, for example, at its premiere in Florence in 1842 *Les Huguenots* became a battle between royalists and puritans in civil war England as *gli Anglicani*.[55] Yet the system was far from monolithic or consistent. Andreas Giger has detailed how, despite its fearsome reputation, the Roman censorship eventually accommodated works by Verdi which contained material clearly contravening accepted standards, including *La Battaglia di Legnano*, *Il Trovatore* and *Un Ballo in Maschera*, partly through Verdi's popularity, his personal connections and the individual interests of members of the Papal government, as well as the overriding social imperative to maintain opera performances for the Roman aristocracy.[56] In Milan, despite the initial horror of the Archibishop at the profusion of religious and ecclesiastical scenes in the text for *I Lombardi*, only the Marian prayer was eventually censored. Francesco Izzo has distinguished between cases of religious and political motivation for the Milanese censorship of what seem

[55] The censored version had originally been made for Munich in 1838 as *Die Anglikaner und die Puritaner*. In parallel another censored version circulated in Italy as *I Guelfi e i Ghibellini*. Staffieri, *Musicare la Storia*, pp. 93-98.
[56] Andreas Giger, 'Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi's Operas in Rome (1844-1859)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3 (November 1999), pp. 233-265.

like similar Marian themes in *I Lombardi* and *Giovanna D'Arco*.[57] Yet limits could neuter a religious setting or make Verdi withdraw a work. Perhaps his most religiously sensitive opera, *Stiffelio*, in which a Protestant pastor forgives his adulterous wife from the pulpit while quoting from the Gospel, suffered almost total emasculation of its religious setting by the Austrian censors.[58] Giger also details how a secondary system of censorship operated, with the authorities monitoring performances to ensure adherence to approved texts, and prevent any improvisation. Their surveillance also monitored the behaviour of audiences in an environment which aimed to reflect the social hierarchy in a physical context, but was also famously susceptible to unruly or seditious outbursts.[59]

Much of the historical and musicological literature on opera in nineteenth-century Italy gives the impression that pre-unification censorship of opera was immediately swept away by the piedmontese system instituted in 1850 which became the basis for regulation in the new state after 1861.[60] Very few studies of opera in Liberal Italy even mention censorship as an issue. Irene Piazzoni has detailed the operation of the new system, which was periodically updated while maintaining broad discretion across the three areas of religion, morality and politics, even in a new public security law of 1889.[61] The piedmontese system prohibited “anything which might offend the predominant religion” as well as liturgical ceremony, profanation of religious symbols, staging religious figures which might give rise to religious offence, or dressing

[57] Francesco Izzo, ‘Verdi, the Virgin, and the Censor: The Politics of the Cult of Mary in *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* and *Giovanna d'Arco*’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 60, no. 3 (Fall 2007), pp. 557-597.
[58] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, vol. 1, pp. 447-474. It remains unclear how much of the previously censored text was restored in the 1852 Fenice production, although the critical religious setting and text of the final scene appears in the published libretto. Philip Gossett, ‘New Sources for "Stiffelio": A Preliminary Report’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Nov., 1993) pp. 204-5; Francesco Maria Piave, *Stiffelio: musica del maestro Giuseppe Verdi da rappresentarsi al grande teatro della Fenice in Venezia il carnevale 1851-52* (Milan: Ricordi, 1851).
[59] Giger, ‘Social Control’, p. 234.
[60] For example, “… censorship was not a problem for operatic composers after the unification of Italy”, Philip Gossett, ‘The chorus in Risorgimento opera’, p. 61.
[61] Irene Piazzoni, Spettacolo, istituzioni e società nell' Italia post-unitaria 1860-1882 (Roma: Archivio Guido Izzi, 2000) pp. 135-138.

characters in costume which might reference the various ecclesiastical orders.[62] As John Davis has pointed out, the new law brought Italian jurisdictions more in line with other European countries which operated pre-censorship, including France and England.[63] Distinctions between spoken drama and opera were also commonly drawn in many countries. In France, censors referred in correspondence to a greater latitude afforded to opera than spoken drama.[64] Piazzoni has identified similar sentiments among the censorship bureaucracy in the 1860s in Italy, notably in relation to adaptations of *La forza del destino*. An Italian adaptation of Rivas' play was refused a licence the same year that Verdi's opera was premiered under the title *Don Alvaro*. The censor condemned the idea behind the text, that the 'force of destiny' was irresistible even for a good person, as it "offended every principle of morality and threatened the value of human free will", as well as mixing the sacred and the secular. A musical setting, however, "appealed more to the senses than the intellect" and a number of small details had been excised.[65] Piazzoni also reveals that, in the case of Reggio Emilia, which was the next city to perform *La forza del destino*, the libretto was sent by the prefect to the Italian Ministry of the Interior, which apart from requiring some changes, in the end approved it, with the similar justification that although the story was "cruel, and the atrocity far-fetched… [it is] transposed into a libretto set to music, in which the words and concepts for the main part are lost on the public".[66] It is clear that spoken drama, and particularly in theatres which were viewed as encouraging sedition and corruption of the young, became the greatest focus of the new censorship, as the perceived threat from

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[62] "nulla vi fosse in odio alla religione dominante" né a quelle tollerate nel Regno; inoltre era proibito rappresentare le cerimonie liturgiche, profanare I simboli del culto, mettere in scena personaggi religiosi che potessero generare odio e disprezzo nei confronti della religione stessa, oppure vestirli con costumi dai quali si potesse evincere con esattezza il grado di appartenenza ai vari ordini della gerarchia ecclesiastica." Decreto del 21 dicembre 1850 e dalla legge di Pubblica Sicurezza del 13 novembre 1859. Il regolamento emanato l'8 gennaio 1860 per l'esecuzione della legge 13 novembre 1859, quoted in Piazzoni, *Spettacoli*, p. 135.

[63] John Davis, 'Italy' in Robert Justin Goldstein (ed), *The Frightful Stage: Political censorship of the theatre in nineteenth century Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2008) pp. 220-221.

[64] Clair Rowden, *Republican Morality and Catholic Tradition in the Opera: Massenet's* Hérodiade *and* Thaïs (Lucie Galland, 2004) pp. 96-97.

[65] "…urta contro ogni principio di moralità a distruggere il frutto dell'umana libertà", [ACS, M.I. S.D. Teatri, b. 14, revisione del 31 agosto 1863] quoted in Piazzoni (2004) p.173.

[66] "truce e inverosimile nella sua atrocità"; "ciò trattandosi di un libretto per musica, in cui le parole e I concetti vanno per la maggior parte perduti dal pubblico", [ACS, M.I. S.D. Teatri, b. 14, revisione del 19 aprile 1863] quoted in Piazzoni, *Spettacoli*, p.173..

Socialism rose in the 1880s. Yet this thesis argues that it would be a mistake to ignore censorship's continuing role in opera with respect to religion beyond its formal system of regulation. Francesco D'Arcais, one of the most influential music critics in Liberal Italy, railed regularly against any religious complaints about anticlericalism on stage, particularly in Rome in the years immediately after 1870. But while complaining about the continuing censorship of prose drama and opera for historical religious figures, including Cardinal Brogni in Halévy's *L'Ebrea*, he admitted that it might be justifiable to prevent satire of living churchmen.[67] Twenty years later he was a member of the jury that was implicated in a blatant case of religious censorship during the Sonzogno competition in which Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* was triumphant, when one long-listed entry was rejected for an unsuitable theme depicting Christ on stage, discussed in detail in Chapter V.

Whether or not librettists and composers sympathised with the motivations for censorship, Michael Walter has emphasised that in the transnational context of the nineteenth-century opera industry they were often highly pragmatic and willing to tailor their material to suit local tastes and regulation.[68] This is consistent with the copious evidence about composers' sensitivity to audience expectations. We can see these strategies operating also in Liberal Italy. In 1894, the republican playwright and radical deputy, Giovanni Bovio, in his play *Cristo alla festa di Purim*, which became a *succès de scandale* and was banned in many cities across the peninsula, had explicitly attempted to avoid offending Catholic sentiment by making Christ a disembodied voice who is shielded from the audience by the crowd when he appears.[69] The opera which was dropped from the Sonzogno competition because of its depiction of Christ, *Il Veggente* (*The Prophet*), was staged at Milan's Teatro dal Verme, but clerical protests were enough to have the composer, Enrico Bossi, himself devoutly Catholic, abjectly withdraw it professing his horror at offending religious opinion.

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[67] "Io intenderei che la censura vietasse di portare sulle scene un cardinale vivente, di fare illusioni ai ecclesiastici di nostri tempi; ma quando si tratta di personaggi storici, quale il criterio, quale è la legge da cui muove questo divieto?" *L'Opinione*, 2 October 1871.
[68] Michael Walter, *Oper. Geschichte einer Institution* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler and Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2016) Book Review by Axel Korner, *Verdiperspektiven*, forthcoming, p. 4.
[69] Giovanni Bovio, *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* 5th ed. (Napoli: Fortunio, 1894) p. 28 "popolo e farisei traggono l'adultera verso la parte dov'è in fondo il pozzo di Salomone, e lo circondano *in modo sino in mezzo alla scena che Cristo non si veda*.".

This thesis uses a transnational approach to pose these questions in three different cities which illuminate the continuing importance of regional and local conditions in Liberal Italy. As Axel Körner states in his study of Bologna's cultural policy in this period, an analysis which has shaped this thesis's approach:

> municipal identity became the key to engaging with the nation as well as with European culture… for understanding the cultural ramifications of attitudes towards societal change, the nation-state and the European experience of modernity.[70]

All three cities which form the case study chapters of this thesis reflect widely different historical experiences of politics and statehood, religious practices and relationship with the Catholic Church, and musical culture, not to mention their individual networks of economic and cultural exchange and migration beyond the Italian peninsula.

The first of these is Turin, the proud piedmontese capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia since 1720, and by default the first capital of the new Italian kingdom. Shorn of its national political and administrative importance from 1865 when the Italian capital moved to Florence, Turin continued to modernise its economy, most famously that sector for which it would remain emblematic throughout the 20th century, the automotive industry. However, Turin also remained an important intellectual centre and the home particularly of positivist philosophy and the new social and human sciences of anthropology, criminology and psychiatry, led by influential figures including Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Morselli. This embrace of modernity through industry and science chimed with the political repudiation of absolutism which the Savoyard monarchy had made after the revolutions of 1848 under the Albertine constitution and the policies of Prime Minister Camillo Benso di Cavour. These included freedom of religion and full civic rights to Jewish and Protestant communities. Yet Turin also demonstrated an openness to the fashionable techniques of hypnotism and clairvoyance which peopled the theatrical stages of the

[70] Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy*, p.5.

city in the 1880s and 1890s in particular, just as operatic styles were also embracing visions of the supernatural, diabolical and celestial in operas including Boito and Gounod's adaptations of *Faust*, Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* and Franchetti's *Asrael*. This chapter locates these operatic visions in the intellectual and scientific atmosphere of the city, particularly through the works of the poet and university teacher Arturo Graf, to produce a lively example of what was recognised by Theodor Adorno as the turn of the scientific mind to ideas of the spiritual and occult in reaction to conditions of modernism and commodification.[71]

Venice's history before its absorption into the Italian kingdom in 1866 had been as a cultural backwater under Austrian rule since the end of the Napoleonic period, which itself had put an end to a thousand years of Venetian independence in 1797. David Laven has challenged existing interpretations of Venetian attitudes to Austrian rule to suggest the experience had been felt to be more benign than usually recognised, bringing benefits in public amenity and security alongside its status within the Austrian Empire as its primary Adriatic port, at least until the experience of the revolt of 1848. After their surrender to Imperial troops in 1849, only gradually did anti-Austrian sentiment come to view Piedmont as the lesser of two evils.[72] Venice's renaissance towards the end of the nineteenth century, following a period of economic crisis during its first Italian decades, was also founded on an international, cosmopolitan industrial model promoting the visual arts through the exhibitions which would become the Biennale, and the revival of its historic role in international tourism.[73] The history of Venice's relations with the Catholic Church also formed one important theme in its collective memory of independence and particularism which would impact on its development of this new status. Opera initially struggled for scarce public funds in competition with other priorities including the international

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[71] "It would be appropriate to consider opera as the specifically bourgeois genre, in the midst and with the means of a world bereft of magic, paradoxically endeavours to preserve the magical element of art." Theodor W. Adorno, 'Bourgeois Opera' in David J Levin (ed.), *Opera through Other Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) p.29.

[72] David Laven and Elsa Damien, 'Empire, City, Nation: Venice's imperial past and the 'making of Italians' from unification to fascism', in Alexei Miller and Stefan Berger (eds.), *Regional integration as a function of empire* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014) pp. 511-552. After 1866 the Austrians developed Trieste as their main port city, to the economic detriment of Venice.

[73] See also Jutta Toelle, 'Venice and Its Opera House: Hope and Despair at the Teatro la Fenice, 1866-1897', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 2007, vol.26, No.1, pp.33-54.

exhibitions, being seen as a plaything of the aristocratic elite. Particularly in the face of the secularising programme of the short-lived administration under 'sindaco-poeta' Riccardo Selvatico, opera's claim to a higher artistic purpose or moral, educative effect, was questioned. Yet by the beginning of the twentieth century, the realignment of Catholic and conservative forces gave an opportunity for the preponderance of religious themes in many operas to receive more generous and positive promotion and reception, culminating with the reception of Wagner's *Parsifal* in 1914.

Parsifal would also invite a distinctively Roman reading on its premiere in the Italian capital in 1914. The extent to which Wagner had recreated a Catholic religious atmosphere in *Parsifal* was, of course, highly controversial after its composition, particularly among former devotees like Friedrich Nietzsche. As well as bewailing what he saw as Wagner's turn to a pessimist, religious message, Nietzsche suspected Wagner of insincerity and pandering to the contemporary German cultural turn towards Catholicism.[74] *Parsifal*'s mélange of Protestant, Catholic and Buddhist religious tropes provided a wide spectrum of available readings. In Rome in particular, we see that a reading consistent with Catholic doctrine largely ignored these other traditions, seeing direct links with Rome itself through Wagner's interest in Palestrina. This reception of *Parsifal*'s religious themes would have been unimaginable when Rome fell to Italian troops on 20 September 1870. This ushered in a tumultuous period in which the confrontation between the Catholic Church and the new State was at its most physical and visceral. As is well known, anticlerical sentiment fuelled increasingly scandalous and gruesome plays depicting various tropes of clerical and religious depravity, from *The Nun of Cracow* to *The Mysteries of the Spanish Inquisition* (both in 1872).[75] While opera offered less confrontational fare it is clear that uncertainty about the application of censorship heightened interest in religious themes and a contrast with the Papal regime, particularly as the Catholic press flourished as a semi-official mouthpiece of Vatican opinion. The physical transformation of the city and the demographic changes which its new status as capital city of the Italian kingdom precipitated, had a profound impact on cultural

[74] James Kennaway, 'Degenerate Religion and Masculinity in Parsifal reception', *Current Musicology*, no. 88 (Fall, 2009) pp. 37-41.
[75] Vittorio Gorresio, *Risorgimento Scomunicato* (Firenze: Parenti, 1958) pp.166-176.

consumption in the city. At first, this heightened the sense of suspicion with which Catholic observers viewed developments like the new Teatro Costanzi, which gradually superseded the traditional theatres operating under the Papal regime. Yet by the turn of the twentieth century any sense of liturgical scenes offending clerical dignity had evaporated and religious themes in opera celebrated by both Catholic and liberal camps.

Preceding these three case study chapters, two thematic chapters address the adaptation of source texts into opera libretti, and the musical and dramatic choices composers made to realise these religious themes. However, the division between these two processes is obviously not always a neat one in this period, given the trend in the nineteenth century towards the composer assuming a primary role in the development of the text, driven more by musical requirements, than the earlier pattern in which pre-published or commissioned libretti were utilised and edited as an opera was composed. I have therefore made some pragmatic choices about which works to feature in each chapter, depending on where choices made about content illuminate particular strategies and views of religion. A further methodological challenge is identifying and accessing versions of operas as they were performed in different theatres. While much research has clarified the genesis and changes between versions of operas like Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Boito's *Mefistofele*, it is often still unclear what versions of operas including Gounod's *Faust* and Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo* were given, based on libretti indicating significant cuts. Matters are not always clarified in the available reception sources. In Chapter I I place particular emphasis on the concept of 'intertextuality', both in terms of the wide range of sources, including non-textual ones like painting, which were frequently drawn on in developing new libretti, and in the implications for their reception in the religious context of Liberal Italy, particularly in the cities I examine in Chapters III to V. Chapter I further explores how successive generations of librettists and composers expanded the religious themes in source texts to maximise the potential with which religious scenes and stage music could convey both the material and supernatural, in ways which might be considered 'real' or 'authentic' to audiences who might read them from a range of religious viewpoints.

Chapter II highlights the extent to which operatic markers of religion, including liturgical scenes and monastic life, prayers and depictions of the celestial and infernal, remained remarkably stable while musical styles evolved rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century. As Marco Beghelli details in *La retorica del rituale*, the musical actions and devices established in the first half of the nineteenth-century opera to represent religious rites formed a broader vocabulary of ritual staging and musical language, and this underpinned the performative force of opera in its sonic, visual and verbal dimensions.[76] I trace how many of these established conventions evolved during the later period, from the interpolations of liturgical scenes, prayers and hymns, to instrumentation, harmonic and rhythmic markers. Using concepts derived from film studies of diegetic and non-diegetic music, I suggest that composers struggled to integrate recognisable religious music within their own musical idiom. Meyerbeer and particularly Wagner offered models which dissolved the division between music heard by the characters on stage as such and the 'vernacular' music of the score, notably in Parsifal where the polyphony based on the Lutheran cantus firmus, the 'Dresden Amen', essentially becomes a liturgical vernacular. Until the 1890s, the dramaturgical opportunities for religious scenes were still circumscribed by conventional expectations, even limitations, of what could be depicted on stage. For example, progressive attempts to depict Jesus Christ were particularly problematic, both musically and dramatically. By using a range of sources including the daily and periodical press in each city and state and municipal records, as well as greater attention to the intellectual discourse and artistic trends and networks in different urban centres, this thesis presents a more complete understanding of how the use of religious themes in opera, partially liberated from earlier restrictions, in was rooted in the wider cultural, social and political context of Liberal Italy, and how diverse audiences understood and related to these themes.

[76] Beghelli, *La retorica del rituale nel melodramma ottocentesco* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 2004) pp. 38-45.

Chapter I – Adapting religion in the operatic libretto

> Now, I want a favour: it concerns the first act (finale), when a solemn *Te Deum* is sung in Sant' Andrea della Valle… For sound effect I need to have prayers recited during the procession of the Abbot and the Chapter. Either the Chapter or the people, then need to mutter some prayer verses softly, in natural voices, without pitch, just as in real life. [Giacomo Puccini to Pietro Panichelli, August 1898][77]

Introduction

Puccini's request to his friend, a Dominican friar, refers to the insertion by Puccini and his librettists of a staged Te Deum for the finale of Act I of *Tosca*, a ritual which in Victorien Sardou's play is only suggested briefly.[78] The quotation encompasses the two central parts of this chapter's hypothesis. Firstly, that the function of religion in the adaptation of source texts for libretti in the post-Unification period, was generally expanded, and secondly, that the predominant effect was to foreground contemporary, but usually conventional tropes of collective and individual piety and religious imagery. Other significant examples will include Desdemona's *Ave Maria* following the 'Willow Song' in Verdi's *Otello* and the Easter Hymn in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, as well as other less well considered texts which furnished operas by the *giovane scuola*.

Italian opera's 'crisis' in the last third of the nineteenth century extended beyond the want of a composer with the musical genius to succeed Verdi, and compete with, or at least respond to, the innovations spreading in popularity across the peninsula from France and Germany. The crisis also bespoke a dearth of literary and dramatic sources and texts considered worthy of the new Italy. The traditional practice in the

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[77] Eugenio Gara (a cura), *Carteggi Pucciniani* (Milano: Ricordi, 1958) no. 195, pp.168-169, quoted in Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art* (trans. Laura Basini) (Chicago: CUP, 2000) pp.152-153.

[78] Victorien Sardou, *Tosca*, a play in five acts (translated by Deborah Burton), published online at www.toscasprism.com. Accessed 17 August 2018.

early nineteenth century, inherited from the Mesastasian example, had been that an opera libretto in which a classical or literary source was composed in metrical verse by a principal author or librettist, was set by a composer (and often a series of composers where a subject was popular and successful), with only minor alteration. They were usually published separately as poetic works. Convention prescribed the distribution of roles by voice type, and hence character, as well as the metrical form which each type of recitative and aria required.[79] This pattern was gradually superseded by one in which the composer had increasing influence over the adaptation and form of the text. Initially this was a trend isolated in the relationship between Giacomo Meyerbeer and Eugène Scribe and the development of *grand opéra* in Paris, in which the ever-expanding scale of the visual spectacle implied a dramaturgy driven by the needs of the composer, and which involved a more iterative genesis of the libretto.[80] Subsequently, Verdi accelerated the elevation of the composer towards a position where he, or Verdi at least, was librettist as much as the writer responsible for sourcing and 'versifying' the text.

This chapter focuses on the process of adaptation from source texts – prose fiction, poetry and drama, narratives (historical and Biblical episodes) and other cultural influences, to consider how religion functioned in this attempted renaissance of the genre. Before looking at some of these adaptations in more detail I will introduce some themes from the historiography of adaptation and adaptation theory on which this chapter will draw, and how such theory might be applied in our context. Adaptation of texts for an operatic libretto, whether from drama or narrative prose, generally requires a radical compression of source texts.[81] As well as a quantitative necessity when setting a text to music, in the nineteenth century it increasingly became a qualitative weapon of the composer, as the demands of evolving musical and dramatic styles superseded the conventions of metrical verse and closed numbers in libretti. Francesco Maria Piave was the victim of Verdi's abhorrence of

[79] Harold S. Powers, '"La solita forma" and "The Uses of Convention"', *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 59, Fasc. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1987), pp. 65-90.
[80] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanisation of Opera* (trans. Mary Whittall) (Chicago: UCP, 1998) pp. 318-341.
[81] Linda and Michael Hutcheon, 'Adaptation and Opera' in Thomas Leitch (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2017) pp. 308-312.

verbosity during his preparation of the libretto for Macbeth in 1846. The composer wrote to his collaborator in capital letters:

> ALWAYS BEAR IT IN MIND TO USE FEW WORDS… FEW WORDS… FEW, FEW BUT SIGNIFICANT… CONCISE STYLE!... FEW WORDS… understood?[82]

Verdi's conception of the '*parola scenica*' which encapsulated the emotional and dramatic essence of a scene initiated the increasing use of demotic idioms anathema to earlier generations of librettists. Use of such everyday language, would however, increasingly clothe the music of the operas of the *giovane scuola*, driven particularly by the style of Luigi Illica as librettist.[83] While the dramaturgy of *grand opéra* was challenging the structural conventions of poetically composed libretti, composers were also concerned to ensure that the spectacle of *grand opéra* cohered through the approach termed 'colour'. Though 'colour' was subject to widely different subjective interpretations, Meyerbeer and Verdi eschewed the more pedantic modes of *'couleur locale'*.[84] Rather than seeking slavishly to recreate the past derived from sources including novels and history, they sought a canvas on which they could project dramatic situations which conveyed the spirit of contemporary society. Religion functioned as a fundamental tool in this approach to operatic adaptation, both in the evolving use of the chorus, and the characterisation of interior feeling and piety.[85] Taking Marco Beghelli's conception of the rhetorics ritual in nineteenth-century melodrama, specifically religious situations functioned as just one subset of this wider vocabulary of dramatic and musical ritual language with which opera was suffused, and in which the performative aspects of ritual operated as an interpretative key to audiences.[86] The weakening of censorship restrictions meant that the use of religious 'colouring', as we might term it, became more explicit

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[82] Verdi to Piave, 22 September 1846, cited in Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi vol.1* pp. 644-645, quoted in Gerhard, *The Urbanisation of Opera*, pp. 419-420.
[83] Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, pp. 230-234; Luigi Baldacci, *La Musica in Italiano: libretti d'opera dell'ottocento* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1997) pp. 166.
[84] Ibid., p. 165.
[85] Sieghard Döring, 'Giacomo Meyerbeer and the Opera of the Nineteenth Century' in Robert Ignatius Letellier (ed), *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) p. 479; Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women*, p. 72.
[86] Marco Beghelli, *La retorica del rituale* pp. 33-45.

in the hands of the generation of the *giovane scuola*, though as we will see later, the boundaries of decorum and acceptability were not always clear and still being tested during the 1890s.[87]

Scholarship which has addressed the principles underlying adaptation has sought to highlight the different processes at work in adaptation from different genres, and the different 'modes of engagement' they imply – 'telling' and 'showing' – often making qualitative and moral judgements about motivation and effect.[88] Gary Schmidgall, and later Michael Halliwell, map out a spectrum of adaptational fidelity to a source text from the direct transposition (a sub-genre variously defined as *Literaturopern* which I shall return to later in this chapter), through various degrees of textual transformation, to those where a source is used only as the starting point for generating a longer work.[89] Halliwell also draws the distinction between elements of narrative, which are easily transposed between genres, and plot strategies, which necessarily belong within specific genres. He agrees with Peter Conrad that the affinities between the 'operatic' elements of the novel are far closer than between music and drama, which Conrad sees as antagonistic partners:

> opera's actual literary analogue is the novel. Drama is limited to the exterior life of action… The novel in contrast can explore the interior life of motive and desire and is naturally musical because mental. It traces the motions of thought of which music is an image. Opera is more musical novel than musical drama.[90]

Jerome Mitchell illustrates this theory in his analysis of operas inspired by Walter Scott's novels. He isolates those elements which made suitable operatic material for

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[87] See particularly chapter V below.
[88] Linda Hutcheon *A Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006) p. 36.
[89] Gary Schmidgall, *Literature as Opera* (New York: OUP, 1977) pp.4-5; Michael Halliwell, *Opera and the Novel: The Case of Henry James* (New York: Rodopi, 2005) p.37.
[90] Peter Conrad, *Romantic Opera and Literary Form* (Berkeley: UCP, 1977) p.1. See also Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* 2nd edition (Berkeley: UCP, 1988) in which Kerman drew a different analogy between opera and poetic drama as the basis for his focus on the underlying function of opera as *dramma per musica*. In this context Kerman uses *Tosca* to demonstrate what he views as Puccini's failure to construct true drama through musical means, pp 4-18.

the developing operatic model of the *primo ottocento*, including the lush pictorial settings, rich variety of character, opportunities for the creation of closed numbers, and violent contrasts of emotion.[91] Many celebrated practitioners and critics continue to privilege source texts. For example, director Jonathan Miller, talking specifically about cinematic adaptation, argues that:

> most novels are *irreparably damaged* by being dramatised as they were written without any sort of performance in mind at all, whereas for plays visible performance is a constitutive part of their identity, and translation from stage to screen changes their identity without actually destroying it.[92]

We see similar sentiments expressed in relation to operatic adaptation. It is an assumption about the outcome of adaptation which even invades the scrupulous analysis by Julian Budden of Verdi's *La forza del destino* (which will be given further attention below), where he writes that Piave and Verdi's libretto "both simplifies and *adulterates* Rivas's original play", perhaps influenced by the Spanish reception to the Madrid premier of the opera, which was reported as having "desecrated a Spanish masterpiece".[93]

Setting aside the dubious implication that adaptations destroy the original source rather than creating a new work, we should acknowledge that such reactions were prominent in the original reception of many adaptations of popular literary and dramatic works which I shall discuss in this chapter, notably those based on Giovanni Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Iorio*. I will therefore draw more directly on Linda Hutcheon's focus on the importance of intertextuality in adaptation. She argues that:

> … seen from the perspective of *its process of reception* adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests

[91] Jerome Mitchell, *The Walter Scott operas : an analysis of operas based on the works of Sir Walter Scott* (Tuscaloosa: UAP, 1977) pp.358-359.
[92] Jonathan Miller, *Subsequent Performances* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) p.66.
[93] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 2*, pp. 431, 436. Emphasis added.

> through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.

Hutcheon emphasises that adaptation often involves multiple sources, is a “creative and interpretive act of appropriation”, and “an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work”.[94] This approach will be helpful in two ways for my analysis of adaptation and operatic ‘markers’ of religion in the following two chapters, as well as for the three case studies which focus on the reception of religion in opera. As I shall discuss, the *giovane scuola*, in trying to synthesise a new operatic dramaturgy and musical language, drew on increasingly diverse literary and operatic sources and influences. Some of these attempts were inevitably viewed as more successful than others. Secondly, the expansion, or elaboration, of religious themes, with the interpolation of religious texts, rites and other tropes, afforded new opportunities for librettists and composers to reflect contemporary religion in a way not previously possible. The insertion of recognisable religious music within the broader canvas of a composer's musical language presented challenges which will be addressed primarily in the following chapter. However, it is useful to note here that this type of intertextuality created an additional frame of reference for the audience who could bring with them a recognition or set of values drawn from religious observance, tradition, politics and other art objects, which operated independently of (or even stimulated by) the narrative voice of the composer. As Beghelli makes clear, these frames of reference were already established in many of the conventions for operatic ritual earlier in the century and I trace the extent to which composers recycled these same rhetorical devices and how they evolved.

The greater part of this chapter will look at different examples of how composers and librettists of opera in Italy after Unification created space for religion through their adaptation of sources, ‘elaborating’ their religious significance through the use of established or novel devices, foregrounding the religious themes or enhancing the religious identity of characters, the staging of religious rites and liturgical music, and the use of metaphysical and celestial voices or scenes of transfiguration. We will see that the type of intertextuality which Hutcheon’s work illuminates, occurs across all

[94] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 3.

different models of adaptation. My analysis begins with a set of adaptations that used both novelistic and dramatic sources, as librettists and composers increasingly looked to canonical works worthy of operatic treatment, including Schiller, Shakespeare, Goethe and Tolstoy.[95] A second set of examples drawing on contemporary drama involved strikingly similar uses of religion in their adaptation as libretti. The third group includes adaptations of historical and Biblical episodes to contrast some of the more conventional and progressive solutions which were attempted through adaptation.

[95] My typology refines the 'spectrum' offered by Michael Halliwell to encompass the multiplicity of sources involved. Halliwell, *Opera and the Novel*, p.37.

Fig. 4 Typology of adaptation of religion from source to libretto

Adaptational Process	**New Operas in Italy 1861-1918 cited as examples**
Commentary: Where there is a clear primary source text, but the adaptation re-focuses the religious context, and can draw in other literary or operatic influences	*La forza del destino* *I promessi sposi* *Don Carlo* *Otello* *Mefistofele* *Risurrezione*
Transposition: Adaptations of contemporary single source texts which mirror the original dramaturgy but may elaborate elements including the religious potential of the operatic genre.	*La Fanciulla del West* *Tosca* *Cavalleria Rusticana* *Mala Pasqua!* *Mese Mariano* *Cristo alla festa di Purim* *La Figlia di Iorio*
Synthesis: Librettos which adapt historical or Biblical episodes freely, drawing on a number of sources and/or influences.	*Il Santo* *Cristoforo Colombo* *Maria Egiziaca* *Asrael* *La tentazione di Gésu*

Across this typology of adaptation, I will focus on several common religious tropes:

Prayers had become established in the *primo ottocento* as useful forms of closed musical numbers, where a *preghiera* reflected the interior religious character of (usually female) characters and offered contrast with collective public prayers and

hymns in various forms, as the expanding resource base needed for the new genre of *grand opéra* heightened the role of the chorus[96].

Liturgical text and full-scale rites on stage were severely restricted in the earlier part of the century by censorship in most parts of Europe. Though their suitability continued to be contested until the end of the century, their use, both in Italian and Latin, expanded, from Desdemona's 'Ave Maria' to the 'Regina Coeli' in *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

Ecclesiastical settings had been used as reference points to symbolise power, refuge and sanctity but often distanced in the process of adaptation so that they were presented on stage as exterior backdrops or off-stage, as in *La Juive*, *Robert Le Diable*, and *Il Trovatore*, where Leonora and the nuns process in front of the convent.[97] Verdi begins to suggest the interior of churches more clearly in *La forza del destino*, a process which would culminate with Puccini's staging of the Te Deum procession in *Tosca*.

Even without adapting church or monastic interiors, religious **symbols and iconography,** particularly crosses, icons, statues and altars, frequently accentuated or focus the devotional perspective and characterisation. This was a particularly gendered phenomenon, as **Marian female devotion** in Italy, as well as in France, was increasingly reflected in operatic adaptation.[98]

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[96] Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women*, p. 67; For a detailed categorisation of the various forms of individual and collective 'preghiere' to be found in nineteenth century opera, see Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, 'Conventions of Prayer in some 19th Century operas', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 146, No. 1893 (Winter, 2005), pp. 45-60.

[97] Though Wagner's operas only began to reach Italian stages from 1871, while *Lohengrin* (Bologna, 1871) and *Rienzi* (Venice, 1875) feature off-stage Church scenes, *I Maestri Cantori* (*Die Meistersinger*) which premiered at La Scala in 1889, opens with the interior of the Church of St Catherine, Nuremberg. Puccini (along with Adolfo Hohenstein who would design the sets for *Tosca*) was dispatched by Ricordi to Bayreuth to see its production in preparation for the Italian premiere for which Puccini was making the edition (heavily abridged). Michele Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini: His International Art*, (trans. Laura Basini) (Chicago: UCP, 1995) p. 57.

[98] Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera Women*, pp. 70; Clair Rowden, *Massenet, Marianne and Mary: Republican Morality and Catholic Tradition at the Opera* (Weinsburg: Lucie Galland, 2004) pp. 44.

Supernatural voices, choirs and visions were increasingly used to embellish existing narratives and expand the sense of the material world counterpointing trends towards naturalism and realism, which will be noted in examples as diverse as Verdi's *Don Carlos*, to the biblical adaptation, *La tentazione di Gésu* by Arturo Graf and Carlo Cordara.

Sacralisation of language frequently enabled librettists to heighten the religious element of an opera, building on Verdi's concept of the 'parola scenica' – perhaps most emblematically, Tosca's final line as she launches herself to her death, "Scarpia, avanti a Dio!", where in Sardou's original, Tosca replied to a curse by Spoletta that he will send her to hell to join her lover, with the prosaic "I'm going there, villains!".[99]

Refocalisation of religion – By shifting the point of reference, sequencing or perspective from which religion is viewed or expressed, the adaptation may be open to different readings. The focus on the expansion of female religious piety in operatic heroines has been frequently highlighted as evidence of the influence of social models of Catholicism in Liberal Italy, and a dichotomy created with supposedly male voices of anticlericalism or negative portrayals of ecclesiastical patriarchy. While many female characterisations at the *fine secolo* exhibit a greater complexity or ambivalence in their moral behaviour, for example Tosca or Mila di Codra in *La Figlia di Iorio*, my analysis will also suggest that operatic adaptations have space for more varied models of male religiosity which can be seen in a number of adaptations.

[99] Victorien Sardou, *La Tosca*, Act V, Scene V, a play in five acts (translated by Deborah Burton), published online at www.toscasprism.com. Accessed 17 August 2018.

Verdian adaptations of religion after Unification

I will begin my detailed survey by highlighting some of the adaptational strategies which Verdi and his librettists employed in *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlo* and *Otello*, models of religion which proved surprisingly durable during the following decades, despite the stylistic and structural innovations in music at the same time.[100] They demonstrate Verdi's use of religion as a tool to heighten the dramatic effect of the libretto, as well as where compression excised plot details which might furnish a prose drama, but which could not be more than extraneous back-story in the operatic dramaturgy.

La forza del destino was Verdi's first opera to be composed after the initial milestone of Italian unification in 1861. It was adapted primarily from the romantic Spanish play, *Don Àlvaro o La Fuerza del Sino* by the Duke of Rivas (1835). Written for St Petersburg where it was premiered in November 1862, Verdi also conducted it himself in Madrid on 21 February 1863, reportedly incurring Rivas's disdain and Spanish disapproval.[101] In Italy it had a fitful but relevant performance history. At the Teatro Apollo in Rome, still under Papal rule, it was premiered as *Don Alvaro* on 7 February 1863 (while the Verdis were in Madrid), where the censors totally neutered the religious setting.[102] Verdi's dissatisfaction with the results of the early performances led him eventually to make a revised version with the libretto adapted by Antonio Ghislanzoni, which was premiered at La Scala on 27 February 1869. John Nádas in particular has emphasised the reception of the finale and its high death toll as a primary motivation for its revision, based on reports quoted in the

[100] The focus of chapters I and II is primarily new Italian opera premiered in Italy after Unification, in which context *La forza del destino* and *Don Carlo* are anomalous as they were created for St Petersburg and Paris respectively. However, the revisions to both operas offer pertinent examples of how such post-composition changes can move adaptations further from the source material. Another anomalous example in this sense, which will be also be covered, is Puccini's *Suor Angelica*.

[101] Verdi to Arrivabene, 22 February 1863, quoted in Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 2*, p. 436.

[102] *Don Alvaro : libretto in quattro atti / di F. M. Piave ; per musica del maestro cavaliere Giuseppe Verdi. Da rappresentarsi nel nobil Teatro di Apollo la stagione di carnevale 1862 in 63* (Rome: Ricordi, 1863)*;* see chapters III and V for specific discussion of the reception history of the opera in Turin and Rome.

Verdi correspondence.[103] In many respects the religious framework in which Rivas's Don Alvaro and Dona Leonor try vainly to escape their destiny is preserved in Piave and Verdi's libretto for *La forza del destino*. Rivas's play even includes prayer forms for Leonora which suggest the libretto's development of her arias '*Madre pietosa Vergine*' and '*Pace, mio Dio*'.

Rivas; Act II.ii[104]	Piave/Verdi; Act II.v
I place my trust in you Most	Mother, merciful Virgin,
Blessed Virgin; please be the	forgive my sin.
refuge for my bitter life. This spot	Help me to erase that ingrate
is the only safe place I can find on	from my heart.
this earth. The sole protection and	In this seclusion
shelter left for me… is the dry	I will expiate my guilt.
peaks of these Mountains…	Have mercy on me, Lord;
O Blessed Virgin be my shield!	do not forsake me.[105]

This scene, when she reaches the Monastery of the Angels, also opens in the play with off-stage organ and chorus intoning Matins' prayer, which Piave and Verdi reproduce after Leonora's aria:

> Venite, adoremus et procedamus ante Deum.
> Ploremus coram Domino, qui fecit nos.

But in other respects Piave and Verdi both demonstrate the operatic need for concision in the narrative, while expanding the use of particular religious symbols to heighten the drama. The play explains what has prompted Leonor, on her confessor's suggestion, to seek refuge at the monastery. The Padre Guardiano

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[103] John Nádas, 'New light on pre-1869 revisions of *La forza del destino*', *Verdi Forum* No.15, Article 2 (1987) p. 8-11; Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 2*, pp. 436-438. As we see from reviews quoted in chapter V on the early Roman performances of the first version, the high death toll was not necessarily the main concern, rather broader problems with the libretto and the dramaturgy of the work.
[104] A translation of Don Alvaro, O La Fuerza del sino by Àngel de Saavedra, Duke of Rivas, trans. Robert G. Trimble (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) pp.39-40.
[105] *La forza del destino*, libretto in quattro atti di F.M. Piave, musica del Maestro G. Verdi (Milan: Ricordi, 1862) p. 19.

recounts the story of the Virgin of the Angels, a woman who, for sins undisclosed, similarly wanted to hide away from the world, and describes her grotto like a shrine. The libretto elides the reference. Instead, Leonora simply says "I seek my tomb here, among the rocks, where another woman lived".[106] Strangely however, Piave and Verdi retain reference to the Madonna of the Angels in the chorus of monks, which is thus rendered unintelligible to the audience.

In Rivas' play the Padre Guardiano leads her inside the Church for absolution and to prepare her for the rigours of the hermitage, while the libretto expands the religious setting to stage the scene inside.

> The great door of the church opens, revealing the high altar illuminated. The organ is playing. Two long files of monks proceed down the sides of the choir, carrying lighted tapers, who kneel in two groups. After them comes the Father Superior, followed by Leonora in monk's habit, who kneels at the foot of the altar, and receives Communion from him. He then leads her out of the church: the monks gather round them…[107]

The main 1869 revision is to the denouement of the opera. The first version of the opera preserved the play's shocking but logical triple death including Alvaro's suicide from the precipice, his blasphemous invoking of the Devil and curse on humanity, and the monks' final reaction "Pietà, misericordia, Signore!". This line suggested to Piave and Verdi the atmosphere of the final scene in which the monks are first heard offstage intoning the Miserere. Eventually, with Ghislanzoni, he arrived at the less gruesome ending which provided a better balance with the Act II finale and a clearer focus on the three principal characters. As the Church scene had been an elaboration of the source play, another liturgical rite seemed superfluous.[108] The revision moves the opera away from the Romantic tragic ending of the play towards

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[106] "Perciò tomba qui desio/ Fra le rupi ov'altra visse."

[107] (See Appendix 1 Source 1) It is worth noting for the later discussion of censorship in the opera, that the performance of the Communion sacrament was deleted in the revised version, presumably because its staging would still be too controversial for conservative Catholic opinion and the Church.

[108] Roger Parker suggests the opportunity for revision enabled Verdi to integrate the finale with earlier parts of the score more satisfactorily. Roger Parker, 'One priest, one candle, one cross', *The Opera Quarterly*, Volume 12, Issue 1, 1 October 1995, pp. 31-32.

one of religious consolation. The Padre Guardiano's role is enhanced as the voice of moral and religious orthodoxy which helps persuade Alvaro to live, as Leonora successfully implores him to pray for redemption. When she expires, the Padre Guardiano declares that Leonora is not merely dead, but saved, an ending which seems to bridge that of *La Traviata* with Gounod's rendering of *Faust*, which had received its Italian premiere in 1864. Budden speculates that this change, from an "anti-religious bias" to a more conventional religious ending was influenced by Verdi's semi-religious meeting with Manzoni in 1867 shortly before the acceptable alternative denouement was arrived at. He draws further parallels between the religious characterisation of the Father Guardiano, Brother Melitone and Alvaro in his Brother Raffaele guise, with Manzonian characters from *I promessi sposi*, the novel which Verdi had treasured since reading it as a sixteen-year-old.[109] While there is no reason to question the influence of Manzoni on Verdi, it seems permissible to cavil at this overly cosy biographical conclusion. Firstly, these supposedly manzionian characterisations were essential to the first version of the opera written long before their meeting. Secondly, if the childhood importance of *I promessi sposi* were the slow-burning impetus for these similarities, the meeting with Manzoni seems anecdotally convenient but superfluous to Verdi's inspiration.

Alongside *La forza del destino* it is worth considering a case of direct adaptation of Manzoni's novel, first published (as *Fermo e Lucia*) in 1827. As has been noted by Cheskin, *I promessi sposi* was adapted as an opera repeatedly from as early as 1830.[110] The success of Errico Petrella with his adaptation in 1869 (libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni) prompted Amilcare Ponchielli to revise his 1856 version which had failed when it premiered in Cremona. Their popularity at this point suggests continuing resonance of the Catholic-Liberal ideas with which the novel is imbued, and which were distilled by Francesco de Sanctis only in 1870.[111] Ponchielli's opera, even in its first version, was unique among these adaptations of the novel in encompassing the entire span of the novel. Other adaptations had been more

[109] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 2*, p. 440.
[110] Cheskin, 'Catholic-Liberal Opera', p. 42.
[111] Ibid., pp. 60-68. Francesco de Sanctis, *Opere di Francesco de Sanctis 11: La scuola cattolico-liberale e il Romanticismo a Napoli / Francesco De Sanctis; a cura di Carlo Muscetta e Giorgio Candeloro* (Torino: Einaudi, 1958).

selective while attempting to preserve the moral tone and message at its core. Censorship had presumably made some of explicit religious colour so essential to the novel and its genre impermissible on stage, but Cheskin suggests that by the time of Petrella's opera and Ponchielli's revision, "a choice to set a patriotic Catholic-Liberal text which, *outside of the boundaries of the censor*, could indeed find its full expression" (emphasis added). This conclusion is worth re-examination in the context of adaptational strategies at this point in the history of Italian unification.

Ponchielli's adaptation (an amateur Cremonese libretto revised by Emilio Praga in 1872), as Cheskin notes, uniquely preserves the morally compromised character of the Nun of Monza. The Signora, as she is styled in the opera, represents a highly transgressive model of female piety, for which she was notorious long before Manzoni inserted her into his novel as the former lover of Egidio, henchman of the Innominato, who kidnaps Lucia on behalf of don Rodrigo. Ponchielli counterpoints Lucia's virginal, pure devotion to God through the Signora's tortured preghiera (Part III.i). Yet this is only comprehensible with knowledge of Manzoni's retelling of the details of the history of Sister Gertrude (as she appears in the novel) in chapters XIX to XX, or the existing popular retellings of the historical figure of Sister Virginia Maria (Marianna di Leyva y Marino), as the nun's sexual adventures and complicity in murder are absent from the libretto. As well as losing a real sense of the Signora's motivation for betraying Lucia in the libretto, that is her debauched obligation to Egidio, Manzoni's explicit contrast of the moral habits of the aristocracy, both sexually and through families' use of forced admission to religious orders (*monacazione forzata*), with the simple purity of the peasant class from which the betrothed come, is also less clear.[112] Instead the Signora's anguished betrayal of Lucia is heightened by the interpolation of an off-stage chorus of nuns to the *pezzo concertato* in which the thugs (bravi) are waiting to abduct Lucia. The nuns sing a prayer to the Virgin to intercede for sins seen by God.[113] Lucia is hauled off leaving

[112] The Signora's anguished plea says obliquely that she is "bound to a deadly man. A yoke so heavy. Ah misery, there is no equal here on earth!" and she cries out for death to release her ["E già tremendo un vincolo/ Mi lega a un uom fatale; Giogo sì duro; ahi miseria! Non v'ha quaggiù l'eguale/ T'affretta, o morte, a spegnere/ M'immenso mio dolor."]. Amilcare Ponchielli, *I promessi sposi: melodramma in quattro parti* (Milan: Ricordi, 1912) pp. 19-20.
[113] "Vergin santa, che intercede/ Grazie in cielo ai peccatori,/ Tu le nostre colpe vedi,/Tu ne implora a Dio mercé./ Tu conforta i nostri cuori/ Nostra speme è solo in te." Ponchielli, *I*

the Signora to bemoan her fate and coyly reference her past “love made me mad, and led me into many errors!”[114] Whether the changes were made for concision or discretion may be moot, but they intensify the religious atmosphere, using conventional means of the off-stage chorus while sanitising the back-story of the SIgnora. Fear of censorship can also be inferred through the treatment of Cardinal Federico Borromeo within the narrative of both these adaptations, despite both being premiered several years after the change in censorship regime in the north of the peninsula.[115] Borromeo’s sanctity, in the novel, is responsible for one of the great religious climaxes of the book as he inspires the Innominato to convert, end his reign of terror, and release Lucia (Chapter XXIII). It is a scene rich in pathos and religious tenderness, in which the Cardinal quotes from the book of Isaiah. Ghislanzoni, in a short preface to his libretto for Petrella, states “reasons and practicalities which those familiar with the theatre will understand, compelled me to leave in the shadows the interesting figure of Cardinal Federico Borromeo and omit the sublime episode of the conversion”.[116] Although he suggests this is to avoid enlarging further the list of characters, he concludes that the cardinal could not appear in a libretto unless he took a primary part or a mute role. His judgement is perhaps vindicated by Praga’s insertion of the Cardinal in the finale of Act III in Ponchielli’s revised version. Although this suggests an exploitation of greater licence under the new censorship, this is dramatically one of the weakest points of the libretto and the opera. The Innominato’s submission to the Cardinal is omitted, so that the sudden appearance of Agnese, Lucia’s mother to announce Lucia’s salvation and the Innominato’s repentance represents an anti-climax, and is followed by the chorus’s hailing of

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promessi sposi, *opera completa, riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, s.d.) pp. 167-176.

[114] “L’amor mi fa demente, Me trasse a tanto error!”. In the novel, the action moves on without the nun’s reflection.

[115] Manzoni uses the name Cardinal Federigo.

[116] “Due parole agli spettatori: Ragioni ed esigenze che facilmente si indovineranno da chi abbia pratica di teatro, mi imposero di lasciare nella penombra la interessante figura del cardinale Federico Borromeo e di omettere il sublime dialogo della conversione. Quell'episodio, che in ogni modo doveva far parte del melodramma, io fui costretto, per non ingrossare l'elenco già soverchio dei personaggi, a rappresentarlo nelle sue conseguenze e quasi di riflesso. A mio vedere, il cardinale Federigo non poteva figurare in un libretto d'opera se non a patto di essere una parte primaria o una muta apparizione.” Antonio Ghislanzoni, *I promessi sposi: melodramma in quattro atti; musica del m. cavaliere Errico Petrella. Da rappresentarsi al Teatro Carignano in Torino la stagione d'autunno 1869* (Milan: Lucca, 1869) p. 2.

Borromeo's arrival to lead a generic, jaunty pezzo concertato, prefaced by the Cardinal's only solo line "Descend on your head the blessing of God Almighty!".[117] While this scene may reflect, as Cheskin argues, the ironic aspect of Manzoni's treatment of religious enthusiasm, it loses the profundity which would have required a more explicit use of the character of Borromeo than contemporary stage practice would allow.

Adapting History and Realism – Don Carlos

As with *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlos* demonstrates how a Verdian adaptation enhanced a religious setting from the main source text, in this case Schiller's play, *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien*. The opera's revision over a near twenty-year period furnished an Italian version in four acts which foregrounded these changes.[118] Written to a French libretto, for the Paris Opera in 1867, in collaboration with French librettists Joseph Méry and Camille Du Locle, the overall model of adaptation of Schiller's play (itself well-described as 'sprawling' by Julian Budden) follows the familiar pattern of condensing or excising characters and narrative to heighten and clarify contrasts, while creating opportunities in operatic set-pieces for the spectacle necessary for French *grand opéra*.[119]

Religion in Schiller's play is actually quite a marginal theme – principally the incidental setting of a nameless Carthusian monastery, the free-thinking character of Posa, and in the final Act the confrontation between Philip and the Grand Inquisitor and the appearance of the Inquisition to claim Carlos. An *auto-da-fé* is mentioned only in passing. His play is an intimate drama, which exalts the battle of ideals in long rhetorical passages. Verdi and his librettists, on the other hand, were creating

[117] "Discenda sul vostro capo la benedizione di Dio Onnipotente!". Ponchielli, *I promessi sposi*, pp. 191-222. The scene also re-orders the narrative so that Lucia can take part in the finale, when in the novel the public procession following the conversion precedes her private release from captivity.

[118] Analysis of the voluminous archive of primary sources includes Andrew Porter and Ursula Günther including Porter, 'The Making of Don Carlos', *Proceedings of the Royal Musicological Association*, vol. 98 (1971-2) pp. 73-88; Giuseppe Verdi, *Don Carlos: Edizione integrale delle varie versioni in cinque e quattro atti* (edited by Ursula Günther 2 vols. (Milan: Ricordi, 1982).

[119] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 2*, pp. 14-15; Leading Italian critic Francesco D'Arcais mistakenly claimed that Verdi followed the play scrupulously, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 24 June 1867, 'Appendice Musicale'.

grand opéra. From the initial sketch for the opera provided by Méry and Du Locle, the operatic potential of the religious context is amplified, a process which continued through to the final version of the libretto and the version first performed at the Paris Opera. They create an ambiguous suggestion of the supernatural, the interpretation of which was never clearly resolved in successive performance editions.[120]

In Schiller's evolution of the play over two decades, Posa became the central character, whereas the opera returns the focus to the eponymous hero.[121] Yet Posa is turned from a Rousseauist, a religious sceptic, in the play, into a conventionally pious but enlightened Catholic – invoking Catholicism to advocate political freedom, but without further disquisition on the relative positions of the freethinker, the reformer and the orthodox. Furthermore, his religiosity is positively feminised in his friendship with Carlos. Shortly before his death, he sings “God permits us still to love one another/ near him, when we are in heaven”.[122] Conversely, the more direction adaptation by Verdi of the Philip/Inquisitor duet (Act IV/I) (which was re-inserted into the libretto as it evolved) using quotations from Schiller based on the translation by Verdi’s friend Andrea Maffei.[123] This largely preserves the character and function of the Inquisitor, the embodiment of religious obscurantism and overweening power, for example in his line "If I did not stand before you now, by the living God! You would be before us at the supreme tribunal".[124]

As Roger Parker has noted, and as we saw in *La forza del destino*, in Verdian operas, churches are often places of safe haven and sites for interior reflection.[125] In

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[120] As Anselm Gerhard details, these supernatural and mythical themes were grafted onto sources to counter the “all too often prosaic realism of earlier grand opera”. Examples by Eugène Scribe being *La Nonne sanglante* (set by Gounod in 1854) and *La Juive errant* (Halévy, 1852). Gerhard, *The Urbanisation of Opera*, p. 400.

[121] Verdi was later even given to suggesting the role of Posa was a 'marginal and purely singing' one: Letter to Franco Faccio, quoted in Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol.3,* pp. 29, 139.

[122] “Dieu permet encore qu'on s'aime près de lui/ quand on est au ciel”. This is a key example of the Italian translation of the libretto rendering a subtle but significant difference to the religious message. The Italian of Posa’s aria ‘Per me giunto è il di supremo’ gives these lines as “ci congiunga Iddio nel ciel… *Ei che premia i suoi fedel*” ("God will reunite us in heaven, *as he rewards the faithful*").

[123] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol.3*, pp. 15-16.

[124] “O roi, si je n'étais ici, dans ce palais/ aujourd'hui: par le dieu vivant, demain vous-même/ vous seriez devant nous au tribunal suprême!"

[125] Parker, 'One Priest, One Candle, One Cross', p. 30.

Act II.I of the first version of Don Carlos, the Convent of St. Just begins as such a refuge where Carlos seeks solace at the site of his grandfather's retirement and burial, and where he is reunited with his childhood friend, Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa (rather than in the palace gardens at Aranjuez, as in Schiller). Méry and du Locle introduced the ambiguous figure of the monk who may or may not be the living or ghostly apparition of the Emperor himself. Building on the atmosphere created in *La forza del destino*, the scene opens with a chorus of monks, from which, on their retreat into the cloister, emerges the mysterious representation of Charles V. The Monk kneels at the tomb, praying silently. The scene establishes for the first time the significance of the theme of the ephemerality of temporal power in the face of Divine judgement and mercy, which is largely absent from the play. The ‘chorus and prayer’ takes an unusual form in that the text is not obviously a prayer, directed at God, but rather a commentary on Charles' fate. Only when the Monk reaches his final phrase does he direct his speech towards God.

Don Carlos (English Translation)

Chorus of Monks:
Charles V, the august Emperor,
is no longer more than dust and ashes.
And now, his haughty soul
trembles at the feet of the Lord!

The Monk:
He wanted to reign over the world,
forgetting Him whose hand
set the stars in their courses.
His pride was great, his madness
profound!

Chorus of Monks:
Charles V, the august Emperor,
is no longer more than dust and ashes.
Let the outbursts of your anger
be turned away from him, Lord!

The Monk:
God alone is great! His bolts of fire
make heaven and earth tremble!
Ah! Merciful master,
bending over the sinner, grant his soul

the peace and forgiveness which come
down from heaven. God alone is great!

Chorus of Monks:

Charles V, the august Emperor,
is no longer more than dust and ashes.
Lord, let your anger
be turned away from him.
God alone is great![126]

With the arrival of Don Carlos, the libretto immediately establishes his sensitivity to the supernatural through the suggestion that Elizabeth's image has followed him to the monastery: "the image of her who was snatched from me wanders with me in this icy cloister".[127] It almost haunts him, so the introduction of the possibly spectral Charles meets a receptive state of mind. The device of Charles' ghost, while referred to in Schiller's text as the means by which Carlos slips into the Queen's apartments in the final Act (clearly very bad advice given that he is immediately spotted by guards) has no dramatic manifestation or significance in the play. In the opera, the Monk/Charles approaches Don Carlo with the warning that “Only in heaven will he find peace”.[128] Carlos imagines he sees the regal figure of his grandfather under the monk's habit.

In seeking a more concise and unified score, the excision of the opening Fontainebleau act from the 1884 four-act version, further foregrounded the religious setting of Carlos' arrival and meeting with Posa at the tomb of Charles V.[129] The setting of the final Act of the opera (again unlike the palatial location of the corresponding act in Schiller's play), returns us to the Convent of St Just where Elizabeth has retreated, and Carlos meets her on his way to the Netherlands to fulfil his promise to the dying Posa. The play concludes with Philip handing Carlos over to the Inquisition. In the libretto, confronted by Philip, the Grand Inquisitor and a chorus of Inquisitors, the Monk/Emperor emerges from behind the tomb to repeat his

[126] (See Appendix 1 Source 2)
[127] “de celle qui me fut ravie/ l'image erre avec moi dans ce cloître glacé!”
[128] “La paix que votre cœur espère ne se trouve qu'auprès de dieu!”
[129] Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol. 3*, for example pp.58-59.

warning from Act II to his grandson. Philip and the Grand Inquisitor recognise Charles with horror. The Monk/Emperor draws Carlos back into the cloister. Though Verdi responded to the adaptation by creating a bass role of particular stature, the correspondence between Verdi and his librettists during the later revisions of the opera show that he havered over whether the credibility of this device affected the overall dramatic impact: "Charles V alive has always shocked me. If he's alive how can it be that Carlos doesn't know?"[130]

Du Locle's response, apart from a rather weak historical claim of feasibility, that if the Monk were just a Monk this opening scene would lose its dramatic effect. His focus on the dramatic purpose of the Monk/Charles clearly weighed with Verdi as he justified his decisions to tighten but essentially retain the form of the final scene to Giulio Ricordi:

> Charles V appears robed as Emperor!! It isn't very likely… But in this drama, so splendid in form and in its high-minded concepts everything is false… In other words, in this drama there is nothing historical, nor is there any Shakespearean truth or profundity… so one thing more of less won't do any harm; and I myself don't mind this appearance of the old Emperor.[131]

Such sentiments demonstrate that Verdi, however devoted to Schiller's dramatic conception, was clear-eyed about transforming his intimate drama of power relationships into successful *grand opéra*. The dramatic centrepiece of the opera is the final scene of Act III, in which Philip's rejection of the petition of the Flemish

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[130] Letter to Nuttier, 14.6.1882, quoted in Ibid., p.33.

[131] Letter to Giulio Ricordi, 19.2.1883, quoted in Budden, p.37. As Andrew Porter pointed out, the production book (Disposizione scenica) for the first version of the opera, published in 1867, already specified that Charles "appear dressed as a monk, with highly ornate imperial robe and crown", though this hardly seems to settle the ambiguity. Porter disagrees with Gunther that the suggestion is of a ghostly apparition, insisting that du Locle convinced Verdi that the libretto was simply re-ordering historical events, with Charles V continuing to live secretly in seclusion. As the Chorus of Monks in the first scene in the Monastery continued to refer to Charles as no more than earth and dust (as they do in the final scene of the first French version of the opera), it is hardly surprising that in a transnational context this adaptation of Schiller into grand opéra could take very different directions. See for example Gundula Kreutzer's summary of performance history in Germany and reactions to changes to Schiller's text, 'Voices from beyond: Verdi's "*Don Carlos*" and the Modern Stage', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (July 2006) pp. 158-9.

deputies is followed by the *auto-de-fé*. This is the most significant of the religious amplifications inspired by the secondary source for the libretto, Eugène Cormon's play *Philippe II Roi d'Espagne* (1846). However, the dramatic impetus for the scene was Verdi's dedication to the Meyerbeerian model of *Le Profète*.[132] As the final version of this scene appears only to have been arrived at in the last version of the libretto, Verdi's contribution to it must have been crucial. It inserts one other innovation which elevates the scene beyond the spectacle of *grand opéra* into the metaphysical or noumenal – the 'Voice from on High' who proclaims to the burning heretics:

> Fly up to the Lord, o poor souls!
> Come, feel the peace close by the throne of God! Forgiveness![133]

Again, we have two dramatic forces at work here. Firstly, the interruption of an ostensibly realist scene with a supernatural, celestial voice, and secondly, the creation of a dramatic and narrative apex between the two appearances of the Monk/Charles V, echoing a similar religious sentiment – that earthly peace is illusionary (of which the heretics are no doubt keenly aware at this point) and that the peace of God in Heaven was open to the victims of oppression. The use of supernatural tropes by Verdi was unprecedented, going beyond anything suggested in Meyerbeer's grand spectacles of which he was such an admirer. It arguably brings the scene closer, again, to Gounod's recent *Faust* and Margherita's apotheosis, and sets an important precedent for later Italian works in which celestial voices are inserted.

Boito and Boito/Verdi

This Verdian sub-chapter ends with a brief coda of how these adaptational strategies are reflected in the treatment of religion in two operas with libretti by the poet and

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[132] In the Coronation Scene (Act IV/II , Fides publicly recognises Jean as her son as he is being crowned in Münster Cathedral, and we witness a similar confrontation between religious fervour, political power and the personal bonds of parent/child and lover/bride. The act of religious persecution and death by ordeal is equally reminiscent of Halevy's *La Juive*.
[133][133] "Un voix d'en haut: Volez vers le seigneur, volez, ô pauvres âmes!/ Venez goûter la paix près du trône de Dieu! Le pardon!"

composer Arrigo Boito – his own *Mefistofele*, and Verdi's *Otello*. With Boito, Verdi developed a relationship with a librettist unique in his career, having previously treated most of his collaborators principally as versifiers. Once Verdi had overcome the wounded irritation caused by Boito's youthful ode about Italian opera being "befouled like a brothel", assumed to have been directed at himself, he found a collaborator he treated as an intellectual equal.[134] Boito's own reading of sources, particularly Shakespeare and Goethe, brought a new influence to bear on Verdi's adaptive and compositional process. However, we again see religious models which re-interpreted canonical texts of literature in a late nineteenth-century context with very conventional Catholic tropes.

Boito's ambition in encompassing both parts of Goethe's *Faust* in one opera was marvelled at by contemporaries, even if its poetic and dramatic results earned Boito tortuous years after its disastrous premiere in 1868, before its more successful revision in 1875-6.[135] His skilful adaptation enabled him to go beyond the melodrama at the heart of Gounod's adaptation of *Faust* Part 1, which ended with Gretchen/Marguerite's apotheosis, but the scope of the compression of the philosophical aspects of the play resulted in qualitative as well as quantitative changes to the religious setting and effect. In Boito's version of the Prologue in Heaven, he replaces the voice of God with a 'Chorus Mysticus' which in Goethe appears only at the conclusion of Part II (Act V/VII) after Faust's own death and transfiguration of his immortal soul.[136] Rather than engaging with Goethe's image of Faust being finally saved, after his death, by the 'eternal feminine', represented in the figures of the Mater Gloriosa and the female penitents, he creates an Epilogue in Faust's study in which Faust gives a rather conventional bourgeois homily on understanding the path to righteousness:

> "I have tasted each mortal secret

[134] William Weaver (ed), *The Verdi Boito Correspondence* (Chicago: UCP, 1994), pp. xviii-xx.
[135] Antonio Ghislanzoni, who revised *La forza del destino* and was principal librettist for *Aida* was particularly in awe of the achievement, Piero Nardi, *Vita di Arrigo Boito* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942) p. 271.
[136] Faust's Transfiguration in this scene, and the appearance of the female penitents and the Mater Gloriosa, had been adapted in non-theatrical form in Schumann's *Szenen aus Goethes Faust* (1853).

The real, the ideal
The first love of a virgin
The ripe passion of a goddess… yes
But reality proved only sadness
And the ideal a mere dream."[137]

One could say that the moral interpretation within this scene take on a more contemporary religious message, one which would have resonated with the workers of both sexes, as well as their religious guardians and employers watching in the Teatro Civico di Schio at the premiere of *Mefistofele*, which inaugurated the theatre in 1909, as described in the Introduction above. Two other instances speak to Boito's sensitivity to ecclesiastical dignity. The replacement of the voice of God with the 'Chorus Mysticus' in the Prologue in Heaven may have been motivated by pre-emption of censorship or public taste at staging the divine, although Emanuele D'Angelo suggests practicality was at its root.[138] Meanwhile, his attempt at a more contemporary religious satire, in the 'Intermezzo Sinfonico' of the first version, was one of the elements of the first performance which reportedly baffled the Milanese audience, but its anticlerical purpose was made clear by Boito in his annotations on the published libretto. The scene represents the battle from *Faust Part II* between the rival Emperors but adds more specific liturgical touches, including Mefistofele leading a Te Deum and the closing cry "Viva La Chiesa!".[139] As Michele Girardi has pointed out, this was very much Boito's polemic, rather than Goethe's.[140]

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[137] "Ogni mortale mister conobbi/ il real, l'ideale/ l'amore della vergine/ e l'amore della dèa... Sì/ ...ma il real fu dolore/ e l'ideal fu sogno...".
[138] D'Angelo (ed.), *Arrigo Boito: Il primo Mefistofele*, p. 157.
[139] "We find ourselves in the middle of the Catholic battle… Mefistofele fighting and winning the battle against the enemies of the papacy; Mefistofele cries 'Long Live the Church!' and intones the Te Deum like a priest, after the massacre. The ecclesiastical psalm is accompanied by a hellish fanfare and sound of cannon. The enemy of light, in alliance with the evil and stupid Emperor, is the natural ally of the Church. How farsighted was the satire of Goethe!" ("Eccoci in piena battaglia cattolica.… Mefistofele combatte e vince la battaglia contro gli assalitori del papato; Mefistofele grida: 'Viva la Chiesa!' e intuona il Te Deum, sacerdotalmente, dopo il massacro. Il salmo ecclesiastico si congiunge allo scoppio delle fanfare infernali e al tuono delle cannonate. Il nemico della luce, d'accordo con un Imperatore imbecillito e pericolante, è il naturale alleato della Chiesa. Chiaro-veggenza della satira Goethiana!"). Arrigo Boito, *Il Primo Mefistofele* (ed. Michele Risolo) (Napoli: F. Perella, 1916) p. 96; Goethe, *Faust Part II*, Act IV/I-II.
[140] Michele Girardi, 'Mefistofele: un'affascinante utopia' in *Mefistofele: Production Programme* (Teatro alla Scala, 1995) p. 30.

In creating the libretto for Verdi's *Otello*, Boito worked principally from Victor Hugo's 1860 French translation of, and introduction to, Shakespeare's play, and while overall the result cleaves nearer to Shakespeare than any previous adaptation of his plays, the process was a forensic one, which James Hepokowski terms 'extraction' of those lines which most suited Boito's interpretation, and which provided most operatic potential.[141] Again we see the ethical dimension of conventional religion being reinforced through the process of adaptation driven by Boito's obsession with the dualism between good and evil in a Shakespearean context. James Parakilas has argued that Boito's main influence on Verdi's *Otello* is the transformation of the focus of the opera from a question of interracial marriage to one of religious difference.[142] The question of how 'liberal' or 'eurocentric' Shakespeare's treatment of race was remains unresolved in theatre scholarship. As Parakilas points out Shakespeare could not, in the circumstances of the early seventeenth century, have dealt openly with religious difference. Nevertheless, he provides a morality play that was readily open to such an interpretation. Boito and Verdi, therefore, had little trouble in shifting the emphasis to a set of religious metaphors, while inserting, in Franceso Degrada's words 'Catholic symbology', for example the people's veneration of Desdemona as the Madonna in Act II.[143] Parakilas' provides a catalogue of examples of how this process works. In the soliloquies for each main character, Boito establishes a gendered dichotomy of religion, with Christian faith twisted by both Iago and Otello into one of vengeance and cruelty, far removed from

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[141] James Hepokoski "Boito and F-V. Hugo's 'Magnificent Translation': Studying the Genesis of the Otello libretto in *Reading Opera* ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 34-5. Hepokowski suggests that there were three main 'continental' influences on Boito's libretto, Hugo, Schlegel's racially-focused criticism, and the earlier Italian acting tradition of Ernesto Rossi and Tommaso Salvemini which took on Schlegel's attitudes (pp.50-51). For further discussion of the influence of theatrical representations of Shakespeare's Othello on the performance and reception of the opera, see Enza de Francisci and C. Stamatakis (eds.), *Shakespeare, Italy and Transnational Exchange: Early Modern to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[142] James Parakilas, 'Religion and Difference in Verdi's Otello', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 371-392.

[143] Francesco Degrada, 'Otello: Da Boito a Verdi' in *Il Palazzo incanto: studi sulla tradizione del melodramma dal Barocco al Romanticismo vol.2* (Fiesole: Discanto, 1979) p. 159: The children's chorus sings: "We proffer lilies, tender flowers/ by angels borne to heavenly bowers,/ which ornament the gleaming mantle/ and gown of the Madonna gentle/ and her holy veil." ("T'offriamo il giglio, soave stel/ che in man degli angeli fu assunto in ciel/ che abbella il fulgido manto e la gonna della Madonna/ e il santo vel".)

either the feminised Posa or the theocratic Inquisitor in Don Carlos. The creation of Iago's 'anti-credo' is a *boitiano* innovation, making Iago more diabolical than Mefistofele himself in his own speech to Faust ("Io sono lo spirito che nega…").

> I believe in a cruel God
> who created me in his image
> and who in fury I name…
> Death is nothingness,
> heaven an old wives' tale.

In Desdemona's 'Ave Maria', the public icon of Act II is given a contemporary domestic incarnation, kneeling at her *prie-dieu*, reciting a paraphrase of the litany in the vernacular, and interpolating it with a personal prayer both for others and in resignation at her own fate. While these examples of how an adaptation can shift the focus of the source text are extremely clear, it is only curious that in its contemporary and subsequent reception of Boito and Verdi's *Otello*, the religious element of the opera remained less significant than the racial one, perhaps because the religious idioms seemed more conventional and the question of race, and the threat of racial difference was beginning to impinge rapidly on Italian politics in the years after *Otello*'s premiere. Nevertheless, *Otello* represents the culmination of a trend which started as early as *La Traviata*, of contemporary religious sensibility and images being translated into operatic tropes. The adaptation of literature and drama represented in Verdi's later operas from *La Forza del Destino* onwards created a set of models in which contemporary Catholic attitudes were grafted onto the texts of earlier historical and intellectual frameworks. As the creation of operatic libretti in the years following *Otello* drew increasingly on contemporary literary and dramatic trends – Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* was premiered only three years later – these models were largely replicated.

Sanctity and anticlericalism in Cristoforo Colombo

The libretto for Alberto Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo* by Luigi Illica offers an example of a similar process of enveloping a mythical historical episode in the tropes of contemporary Catholic iconography. Franchetti had been recommended by Verdi

for a commission by the city of Genoa to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage.[144] The libretto drew on episodes from several sixteenth-century sources and nineteenth-century models, including Bartolome de la Casas' *History of the Indias* (completed in 1561), Fernando Colon's biography of his father (1571), Lorenzo Costa's 1846 epic poem about Columbus and Felice Romani's libretto of *Cristoforo Colombo*, which also drew on some of the same sixteenth-century sources, particularly Fernando Colon. Romani's text was first set by Francesco Morlacchi in 1828, and a succession of other composers in Italy. His narrative focuses on the relationship between Columbus and his son, who will eventually seal the explorer's reputation for posterity by writing the *Vita*, and uses this as the centre for a melodrama of cross-cultural love and discovery of common humanity between Europeans and Indians.[145] This narrative focus echoed one of the more significant Spanish American-set operas with which Romani would have been familiar, *Fernando Cortez* by Spontini, originally written in 1809 and revised in 1817, which had only limited use for the religious mission of the Spanish, who utter only the occasional generic "cielo" and focuses instead on the interracial themes.

Franchetti adopted a Meyerbeerian grand-opera model for the dramaturgy of *Colombo*, particularly drawing inspiration from *L'Africaine* (in which Vasco da Gama is the hero condemned by a Grand Inquisitor), and perhaps also Verdi's *Don Carlos*. He was also attempting to breathe new life into the Italian historicist version of 'opera-ballo' developed by Ponchielli and Gomes as well as channelling Italian interpretations of Wagner's music dramas.[146] The need for improvements on earlier versions of the Columbus narrative directed Franchetti and Illica's reading of sources in a different direction. In their adaptation (though Illica was to withdraw his name from the published libretto after the first performance following disagreements between them), the perspective and focus changed to create a polarity between colonialist holy war, and the liberal, pious heroism of Columbus and Madonna-like

[144] Richard Erkens, 'Cyclical Forms in Musical Dramaturgy: Comments on Alberto Franchetti's Cristoforo Colombo' in Paolo Giorgi and Richard Erkens (eds.), *Alberto Franchetti: L'uomo, il compositore, l'artista* (Lucca: LMI, 2015) p. 78.
[145] Felice Romani, Colombo, melodramma serio in due atti (Genoa: Ponthenier, 1828)
[146] Luca Zoppelli and Arthur Groos, 'Twilight of the True Gods: Cristoforo Colombo, I Medici and the Construction of Italian History', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 8 no. 3, November 1996, pp. 256-9.

sanctity of Queen Isabella. The former was represented primarily in a tableau at the end of Act IV, in which, as Luca Zopelli outlines, the monks are perpetrators in the desecration of the Indian temple following their mass suicide. This scene was, however, deleted after the first performance. Franchetti's ambivalence about the role of religion in the epic version of 'national' myth-making in which he was engaged, then became more conventional, with the saintly figures of Columbus and Isabella dominating, and the monks' main intervention their more benign service aboard ship in Act II.

Fig. 5 Luigi Illica and Alberto Franchetti, Cristoforo Colombo (1892) Synopsis

Part 1: The Discovery

Act 1: Salamanca, The Courtyard of the Convent of San Stefano (1487)
Despite the pilgrims' yearning for fulfilment of the prophecy of new lands, the Council declares against Colombus' theories. Queen Isabella appears like a veiled heavenly vision and grants Colombus the means to conduct a voyage.

Act 2: Aboard the Santa Maria (1492)
The crew have lost hope in the discovery of new land or returning home, and even Colombus begins to doubt. During the evening service the knights plot to murder Colombus and are on the verge of throwing him overboard when land is sighted.

Part 2: The Conquest

Act 3: Xaragua (1503)
Atrocities against the indigenous people by the Spanish form the backdrop to two love plots – one real between a young Spaniard and the daughter of Queen Anacoana, and the Queen's feigned affair with Rolando as a ruse to ambush the invaders.

Act 4: Xaragua (1503)
Colombus returns and manages to calm the situation until a royal messenger arrives to order his arrest and return to Spain. As the Spanish run amok, the Indians immolate themselves on a pyre in their temple.

Epilogue: Medina del Campo (1506)
Aged and infirm, Colombus seeks an audience with Queen Isabella in the crypt of the Kings of Spain, only to be told she is dead. He goes mad, remembering episodes from his life, before committing his soul to God in his dying breath.

The premiere was met with considerable acclaim, though it was rapidly clear that part two failed to match the consistency and structural unity of the first part, which led to radical pruning. Zoppelli suggests this "moderation of anticlericalism… perhaps corresponded to a cautious reconciliation between the Italian bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church… motivated primarily by the need to reunite a middle class uneasy at the growth of political ferment within the proletariat".[147] However, there is no need to look to the later versions of the opera to identify a less hostile view of Catholicism or faith in the opera. As Richard Erkens notes, the *feste colombiane* to mark the 400th anniversary of Colombus' voyage, for which Genoa commissioned the work, as well as being a municipal project to elevate the city's status within the new Italian state, was also promoted by the Church, with the religious mission of Colombus attracting the support of Pius IX. According to Erkens, this led Illica and Franchetti to inflate "the discovery of the unknown continent with a salvific dimension in Christian terms by modelling the portrait of the seafarer's life into the legend of a saint".[148] The journey of Colombus through the opera can even be read as embodying a Christ-like passion, suggesting perhaps Wagner's *Parsifal* as one influence, and Isabella a hybrid between an angel, a Madonna, a prophet and an unconsummated lover.[149] Two scenes illustrate this.

The opera's reception generally applauded the finale to Act II aboard the *Santa Maria*. With hope dwindling, the monks and crew intone the Salve Regina, while the conquistadors work themselves into a mutinous state against Colombo. This presents a powerful example of the interpolation of Catholic liturgy whose function is part of the miraculous finale. Its musical significance will be discussed further in Chapter II. The second episode is the epilogue to the opera. The death of Queen Isabella before this scene prevents her reconciliation with Columbus, and prompts him into a brief descent into madness while kneeling in prayer and kissing Isabella's

[147] Zoppelli and Groos, 'Twilight of the Gods', pp. 254-255. Given the setting it could also reflect Italy's new quest for colonial adventure in Africa and a preference to project a less blood-thirsty image of colonialism. For a detailed analysis of the evolution and compression of the American acts between 1892 and 1896 for primarily practical reasons, see Erkens, *Alberto Franchetti – Werkstudien zur italienischen Oper der langen Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011) pp. 177-202.
[148] Erkens, 'Cyclical Forms in Musical Dramaturgy', p. 79.
[149] Ibid., pp. 95-6 and n.

tomb before expiring with the words: “Lord, in extreme agony, at the final pain, I commend you my soul”, a clearly Christ-like reference.[150] Franchetti’s opera proved too dramaturgically eclectic to successfully forge the new type of ‘historical verismo’ which its scope implied. However, its adaptation of religion as a largely positive ethical framework provided a sense of continuity between the literary canon prevalent in Verdi’s later operas and the premiere of *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

Giving space to religion in contemporary drama

While Franchetti’s attempts at a specifically Italian historical grand opera largely failed to herald a new direction, librettists and composers had already begun to turn to more reliable dramatic fare for inspiration – the successful contemporary drama, notably those derived from the literary verismo of Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana, the racy melodramas of Victorien Sardou and the decadent myths of Gabriele D’Annunzio. This approach to adapting existing dramatic texts during this period exemplifies some of the problems in creating an operatic libretto from a well-known source text, particularly a dramatic one, and the intertextual consequences which impact on audiences. In several of these cases this includes the influence of the success of their theatrical models both as motivation for their adaptation as operas, and crucially for aspects of characterisation, staging and reception, the performance of the leading female role. Most significantly, Eleonora Duse created the roles of Santuzza in Verga's play of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Jorio*, while Sarah Bernhardt created Sardou's *Tosca*. The acting style of Bernhardt and Duse and the 'diva' actresses who followed them, for example Lyda Borelli, were hugely influential in the critical and public reception of female roles and more general social attitudes to femininity.[151] Before then, frequently, the ‘imitative’ lyric opera would be performed in the same theatres as its prose drama model even during the same season. For example, this was the case at the Teatro Carignano in

[150] "Signore/ nell'estrema agonia/ nell'ultimo dolore/ a voi l'anima mia!..." In the 1923 revision of the opera, when the American scenes were excised, a final third act in which Colombo and Isabella meet again in the church at Palos was created. See Erkens, *Alberto Franchetti – Werkstudien*, pp. 208-18.
[151] Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: UCP, 1992) p. 211.

Turin where Verga's play had been premiered in 1884, and at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, where Mascagni's operatic version was first performed in 1890.

Cavallerie Rusticane

The adaptation of Luigi Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni for the Sonzogno competition of 1890 and its eclipsing of another adaptation of the same source, *Mala Pasqua!!*, by Stanislao Gastaldon, has been examined from several angles. The co-option of literary verismo for the operatic stage, which was taken as a short hand for some of the trends evident among the *giovane scuola* in the 1890s, has generated considerable debate about the process of adaptation as well as the significance of the term 'verismo' in an operatic context.[152] As Jonathan Hiller and Matteo Sansone highlight, earlier scholars focused on a negative assessment of the veristic qualities of the libretto for Mascagni's opera compared to Verga's original, or even Verga's own dramatic adaptation, analysing the extent to which his text was qualitatively damaged or weakened. In formal terms, these adaptations also demonstrate the extent to which composers and librettists were prepared to move from the pervasive influence of conventional operatic structures and the expectations of 'number-opera'.[153]

The literary verismo which Verga and his contemporaries had drawn from French models, principally Émile Zola, had already been modified through Verga's willing adaptation of the short story *Cavalleria Rusticana* for the stage in 1884.[154] He embellished the characteristically sparse prose of his short stories to a more conversational style appropriate to bourgeois theatre. Much of this new material was

[152] Jonathan Hiller, 'Verismo Through the Genres, or "Cavallerie rusticane"- The Delicate Question of Innovation in the Operatic Adaptations of Giovanni Verga's Story and Drama by Pietro Mascagni (1890) and Domenico Monleone (1907)', *Carte Italiane* (2)5 pp. 109-132; Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, 'Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation.' (Trans. Roger Parker), *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 5:1 (Mar 1993): pp. 39-53; Matteo Sansone, Verga and Mascagni: The Critics' Response to 'Cavalleria Rusticana', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (May 1990), pp. 198-214; Mallach, Pietro Mascagni and his operas (Northeastern University Press, 2002) pp. 65-70; *The Autumn of Italian Opera* (2007) pp.29-35. As Sansone and others have detailed, Verga launched a legal case against Mascagni for breach of copyright which resulted in an eventual settlement by Sonzogno.
[153] As analysed in Powers, '"La solita forma"', pp. 65-90.
[154] Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, p.29.

transposed into Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci's libretto for Mascagni, the Magdalene figure of Santuzza was expanded (specifically to create a vehicle attractive to Duse), and the hypocrisy of Lola, whose blatant adultery does not prevent her joining the other women in Church as it does the guilt-ridden Santuzza, is also foregrounded. What is innovative in Mascagni's opera (and distinctive from Gastaldon's version) is the staging of the Easter hymn 'Regina Coeli' which both honours the Virgin whom Santuzza adores, while placing Santuzza beyond this community for her sinfulness. Sansone rather dismisses this aspect of the adaptation, claiming that the opera loses from the play's opening scene a "haunting sense of the religious festivity…" in moving from a 'crowd' scene in which individual characters all contribute to the dialogue, to a 'chorus' scene with only a small number of named singing parts. The musical devices which Mascagni uses to suggest the setting, according to Sansone, "tend to remain exterior and decorative".[155] Guarnieri Corazzol also focuses on this loss of 'coralità' from the Greek chorus of four individual villagers. For her, an operatic exoticism of a rather comforting nostalgia through the picturesque, replaces Verga's own invented exoticism of language.[156] The 'invented' South of the northern Italian cultural imagination also finds representation through the distancing and de-politicising picturesque scene-painting.[157] Strangely, the specifically religious aspects of the operatic adaptations have received much less attention in these analyses. They can be seen to function in both directions which Corazzol and John Dickie identify, reminding the anticlerical bourgeois of the narrow-mindedness of the devout peasantry, or signalling through the use of recognisable and familiar Easter hymns (absent from Verga) and religious symbols, a shared piety for the more conventionally Catholic.

It is true that the religious context of the Sicilian village is scattered through the dialogue of the play between the villagers. Some of these references are transferred into the different libretti, from Santuzza's confession of being in mortal sin, and her piety, to the villagers' joking about Lola's infidelity through the reference to the

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[155] Sansone, *Verismo: From Literature to Opera* (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1987) p. 38.
[156] Corrazol, 'Opera and Verismo', p. 51.
[157] John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno 1860-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1999) p. 92.

proverb "Il Carnevale fallo con chi vuoi. Pasqua e Natale falli con I tuoi".[158] Still, the scale at which the play operates can have the use for the mass chorus required in opera at this period. Conventional forms of religious chorus were therefore the means they have available to communicate a recognisable religious setting. As Mallach argues: "Mascagni brings the community alive through his use of the chorus… Their power lies in their constant presence."[159] Parakilas sets the opera in the wider context of the political meaning of the chorus – operas he terms of “village nationalism” used the chorus to display social hierarchies without putting kings on stage.[160] In more prosaic terms, they are fulfilling the requirements of which will be expected of impresarios, theatres and the public to use local choruses. If we compare the three Easter scenes from each of the operatic adaptations of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, we can see how librettists and composers expanded the dramaturgy of the original with similar mixtures of Latin liturgy alongside vernacular hymns, creating a narrative scene of familiar Catholic ritual, rather than any identifiable exoticism.

[158] “Spend Carnival with whomever you like but be at home for Easter and Christmas".
[159] Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, p.66.
[160] James Parakilas, ‘Political Representation and the Chorus in nineteenth century opera’, *19th Century Music*, vol.16 n.2, Music in its Social Contexts, (Autumn 1992) p.191.

Fig. 6 G. D. Bartocci Fontana, *Mala Pasqua!* (1890) by Stanislao Gastaldon

Chorus:
They are here. Look there they are!

Brasi:
Kneel everyone!

(Everyone is arranged kneeling in two rows from the first wing stage left until the doors of the church. Between the two rows appears a small rural procession. Peasant girls and boys dressed in white enter before the canopy carried by villagers; around the canopy a few priests and worthies; a mass of people follow the procession. When the canopy reaches the Church door, bells peel off-stage and the organ intones an introit. – Slowly everyone files into the Church behind the canopy.)

Chorus
O Lord, redeemed sinners
Turn, trembling, to the Lord
But the sorrows in the breasts of the faithful
Join together in celebrating the faith
Which brings them on the rising air
Like incense, Lord, for thee!

Bless the harvest that glows
Laid out on the fragile cart

Bless the clam sea
That reflects the deep blue sky
And, bring us a fruitful peace,
Bless the cradle and the grave!

(All enter the church and the scene remains deserted)[161]

[161] (See Appendix 1 Source 3)

Fig. 7 Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci, *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni (1890)

Chorus
(Inside the Church)
Regina coeli laetare.
Alleluja!
Quia quem meruisti portare.
Alleluja!
Resurrexit sicut dixit.
Alleluja!

Santuzza, Lucia and stage chorus
In the square
Let us praise
The Lord who is not dead,
In blazing light
Has broken open the grave
To the resurrected Lord
Risen today
To the glory of Heaven!

Chorus
Inside the church
Ora pro nobis Deum.
Alleluja!
Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria.
Alleluja!
Quia surrexit Dominus vere.
Alleluja!

Everyone enters the church except Santuzza and Lucia[162]

[162] (See Appendix 1 Source 4)

Fig. 8 G. Monleone, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Dramma lirico in un prologo e un atto, musica di D. Monleone (Milano: Puccio, 1907) (Inno della Risurrezione)

(Thus on this Easter morning everything seems covered by a rare bliss. From the meadows rise sweet fragrances ... It's Easter!
Every heart beats with joy, every soul believes in God; the hymn of the Resurrection rises solemn and glorious on the feast of men and of spring)

Chorus:
In the exultant skies – of angelic choirs
An anthem echoed
Among a cloud of flowers – in the perfumed air, Jesus arose.
Maidens, adorned – with roses crowned!
Risen is the Lord!
Maidens, invoke the highest Name!
Be Faith and Praise
Be Peace, be Love!

Santuzza
By the God who is descended and at the Altar,
O neighbour Alfio, Lola betrays you

The People (inside the Church)

O rex aeterne Domine,
Rerum creator omnium,
Qui eras ante saecula
Semper cum Patre Filius,
Qui mundi in primordio
Adam plasmasti hominem,
Cui tuae imagini
Vultum dedisti similem;
Qui crucem propter hominem
Suscipere dignatus es,
Dedisti tuum sanguinem
Nostrae salutis praetium;
Quaesumus, Auctor omnium,
In hoc paschali gaudio
Ab omni mortis impetu
Tuum defende populum![163]

[163] (See Appendix 1 Source 5)

The exterior setting of the scene presents a challenge for the dramatisation of the Easter Mass. We see a division maintained between the on-stage choir representing the villagers, singing a hymn in the vernacular, and (in two of the adaptations) off-stage singing in Church of liturgical Latin hymns for Easter. Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci give Mascagni a more liturgically specific Easter rite, with the full Regina Coeli hymn, already being intoned inside the Church by the Choir. Similarly, seventeen years later, Monleone also uses a liturgically correct Matins hymn for Easter week. There is no suggestion of an elaborate Easter procession in Mascagni's score, as is given in *Mala Pasqua!*, although obviously modern productions often add effigies, baldacchino, priests, donkeys and all. As we will see in Chapter V, the reception in Rome in 1890 of *Mala Pasqua!* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* provoked very different reactions from the Church towards the ecclesiastical iconography of the religious procession in Gastaldon’s, opera, which was viewed negatively, as opposed to the musical effect of the religious music in Mascagni’s opera, which avoided censure. *Mala Pasqua!*'s broader canvas allowed room for more traditional closed-number forms, including a preghiera for Carmela (Verga’s Santuzza) in Act 1, something not referenced in Verga’s play.

Fig. 9 *Mala Pasqua!*, Act I *Preghiera*

Carmela:
Joy all around! I cry alone!
(*After a while, she raises her eyes, sees the icon and, as if inspired, slowly kneels*).

O blessed Virgin,
Who reads what is in our hearts
Who knows all our yearning,
Who knows all our pain.

You hear the groans
Of all creatures
And have a soothing balm
For all our misfortunes.

Through the holy sacrifice
Of Christ's agony
Descend to my soul
Gentle Virgin!

See the dreadful sacrifice
Of a poor woman,
Let me die… kill me!
Dear Madonna… Madonna!

(Carmela remains motionless in front of the icon)[164]

[164] (See Appendix 1 Source 6)

The prayer then becomes a point of reference in her confrontations with Lola – who mocks her devotion – and with Turiddu, to whom she repeats part of the prayer. Mascagni, of course, shunned the conventional *preghiera* for Santuzza which the situation implies. However, it is possible to view the orchestral intermezzo, coming as it does after her scene with Alfio when she reveals Lola's betrayal, ending with her lines "I'm so guilty to talk to you like this", as a voiceless prayer for forgiveness by Santuzza, with its organ accompaniment and insistent melodic repetition.[165] Despite this possible conclusion, the general function of the religious aspects of these adaptations, as suggested by this chapter's overall thesis, is to foreground a conventional religiosity, piety and ceremony, absent from their source materials, but which would have suggested to audiences elements of their own religious experience or perspective.

Puccini's dramatic adaptations of religion

In the long nadir of Puccini's critical reception during the twentieth century, his attitude towards religion displayed through his operas has figured prominently in contrasting interpretations. However, since Mosco Carner's biography of Puccini in 1958, when he could declare of the Miracle Scene in *Suor Angelica* that to Puccini it represented merely a "telling stage spectacle", musicologists have taken more seriously the religious themes in many of his operas, and the ways in which Puccini and his librettists adapted the religious setting of their sources.[166] While many scholars have continued to accentuate their agnostic or anticlerical intent, a more nuanced analysis of many of the textual and dramaturgical changes supports the argument of this chapter that religion functioned in an anti-progressive, traditionalist mode, notwithstanding the evident anticlerical characterisations which many of them contain. I will consider two cases in particular, those of *Tosca* and *La Fanciulla del West*.

In *Tosca*, the elaboration of the Te Deum procession in the finale of Act I of the opera was driven primarily by Puccini's instinct for the potential of the religious

[165] "Infame io son, che vi parlai così!"
[166] Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1959) p. 442.

setting, only hinted at in Sardou's play.[167] Its staging, and crucially its overlaying of Scarpia's own lustful hymn to Tosca, has been often interpreted as Puccini's desire to heighten the anticlerical portrayal of Scarpia and the Church in defeating the republicans.[168] The specifically Roman context of the reception of the religious elements of *Tosca* will be examined in chapter V to show how much of the anticlerical interpretation of this scene has been misplaced, but here I want to suggest some specific conclusions about the adaptation of the Te Deum procession and rite. The 'murmuring' of the antiphonal prayers, which so excited Puccini, should not liturgically procede the Te Deum canticle itself.[169] However, it recalls both Meyerbeer's co-option of anachronistic Protestant chorales for *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète*, as well as Verdi's dictum that it is better to invent the truth rather than attempt to recreate it pedantically. While Sardou's stage directions do give the gradual arrival of the congregation, in the opera the allocation of these groups re-creates the social hierarchy of Rome, from "shepherds and countrywomen" to townsfolk and ladies.[170] Yet an often-overlooked aspect of the innovation of the Te Deum is the intoning and performance of the liturgy *on stage* in a church interior. As we have seen even in the 1890s, operatic adaptations continued to contrast off-stage and visible action to delineate an ecclesiastical setting from a vernacular chorus or street scene. Perhaps only *Cristoforo Colombo*, as discussed above, had previously pushed the Latin liturgy centre-stage. Even this was the 'outdoor' setting of the ship.[171]

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[167] In Sardou's play, Act I ends with Scarpia exhorting his henchmen to join the Te Deum which starts with off-stage music as the curtain falls. It is worth noting that the opera excises some pious touches which Sardou gives to Scarpia's thugs at this point, when Schiarrone and Colometti (a character who doesn't appear in the opera) make devout signs in the church.

[168] For example, Susan Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome* (Chicago: UCP, 2001) pp. 155-168; David Rosen, 'Pigri ed obesi dei': Religion in the Operas of Puccini", in Arthur Groos and Virgilio Bernardoni (eds.), *Madama Butterfly: l'orientalismo di fine secolo, l'approccio pucciniano, la ricezione, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi Lucca—Torre del Lago 28-30 maggio 2004* (Florence: Olschki, 2008), pp. 280-283. Rosen highlights the ironisation of the scene before the Te Deum itself where the choristers celebrate the prospect of double pay for its performance, something not possible in Sardou's original.

[169] Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*, pp. 162-163.

[170] As will be discussed in chapter V, this insistence on shepherds attending the service has particular resonance in Rome in the context of the prelude to Act III.

[171] Fontana and Puccini had inserted a processional Requiem into Act III of *Edgar* (1889, later revised). Again the scene is outdoors, and indeed the funeral itself is a fake. Similarly, in Act I the Church scene has the chorus praying outside the Church itself which is ostensibly full. Puccini, *Edgar revised 1905 final version* (Milan: Ricordi, 1905).

Tosca's own religiosity is a classic example of the focus of female piety being heightened in the operatic adaptation. As Nicassio has argued, Sardou's Tosca exhibited only a rhetorical attachment to religion, a device to be used in her dealings with men, whereas Puccini's Tosca continuously exposes an innocent Catholicism and genuine devotion. Her travails through the opera only finally lead her to question God's justice in the aria 'Vissi d'arte'.[172] The ritual actions over Scarpia's body which close the Act are mirrored closely between libretto and play, but the opera reflects a difference of religious outlook by the change in Tosca's line immediately Scarpia has expired, from "Now, we're even" ("Ed ora ti ho ripagato*!"*) to "He's dead. Now I forgive him!" ("È morto! Or gli perdono!").[173] This small divergence potentially points to a different motivation for the elaborate, and in the circumstances of fleeing the murder scene, rather risky, pantomime scene over the corpse. While Sardou's Tosca seems to be mocking Scarpia, the operatic Tosca is more likely to be performing a small act of genuine contrition or creating some sense of normality in the moment of trauma and shock through this display of piety. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it also further binds the religious implication of her crime to her final death cry "O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!". It becomes more heart-felt than the rather weak retort which Sardou gives her to Spoletta's threat to send her to join Cavaradossi in death, "I'm going to join him, villains!". With Spoletto and Sciarrone now silenced, rather than in dialogue with Tosca as in the play, her suicide gives her greater agency, while, ironically, reinforcing her religious belief.[174]

A decade after *Tosca*, Puccini, with librettists Guelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini adapted American David Belasco's play *The Girl of the Golden West* as *La Fanciulla del West*. In doing so they expanded the significance of the theme of religious redemption – 'a drama of love and moral redemption' – as the introduction to the libretto labels it.[175] The 'Academy scene', in which Minnie teaches the semi-illiterate

[172] Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*, p. 213.
[173] Ibid., p. 218.
[174] The greater controversy about the end of the opera lies in the musical quotation of the theme from Cavaradossi's aria which opens Act III, 'E lucevan le stelle', as opposed to the three-chord 'Scarpia theme' which dominates the first two acts.
[175] Puccini attested to this in an interview in 1911: Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, p.287. As Annie J Randall and Rosalind Gray Davis detail, the weaving of the 'redemption' theme through the

miners, is transposed to a more prominent place in Act I of the libretto. The text of the lesson in the play, '*Old Joe Miller's Jokes'*, is replaced with a moral lesson from Psalm fifty-one. Minnie's interpretation of the Psalm is significant. The devout churchgoer would have been more familiar with the 'Miserere mei' as a song of penitence, and the use of the 'Miserere' idea had obviously been introduced to operas going back to Verdi's *La Trovatore* as an image of despair and darkness, but here it is transformed into a positive message of hope:[176]

> Minnie: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean…
>
> Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.
> Create in me a clean heart.
> O God, renew a righteous spirit
> Within me…
> (Breaking off):
>
> And that means, you boys, that all throughout
> this world there isn't a sinner to whom
> no road to redemption is open…
> Let each of you lock this supreme truth of love inside you[177]

This scene also provided the dramatic key which Minnie could use at the end of the opera to persuade the men to release Johnson by quoting her own lesson to them.[178] Rosen also suggests that Puccini accentuates the gender division in religious devotion along familiar lines, Minnie more ardent, Johnson less effusive.[179] Yet the power of the lesson of redemption with which Minnie successfully quells their behaviour, hardly suggests a lack of faith among the men of the Golden West.

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libretto was one which exercised Puccini considerably throughout its genesis between 1908 and 1910, see *Puccini and the Girl*, pp. 150-151; *La Fanciulla del West* was premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on 10 December 1910. Its Italian premiere was at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome on 11 June 1911. For its Italian reception see Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, pp. 161-166.

[176] The 1863 version of *La forza del destino* also featured monks intoning the Miserere, although one imagines few audience members would have been familiar with this ending in 1910.

[177] Minnie: "Aspergimi d'issòpo e sarò mondo.../ Lavami e sarò bianco come neve./ Poni dentro al mio petto/ un puro cuore, e rinnovella in me uno spirito eletto... (interrompendosi) Ciò vuol dire, ragazzi, che non v'è,/ al mondo, peccatore/ cui non s'apra una via dl redenzione.../ Sappia ognuno di voi chiudere in se questa suprema verità d'amore."

[178] "Ciò vuol dire, ragazzi, che non v'è, al mondo, peccatore cui non s'apra una via dl redenzione... Sappia ognuno di voi chiudere in se questa suprema verità d'amore"; Rosen, 'Pigri ed obesi dei' pp. 289-90.

[179] Ibid., p. 291.

Furthermore, the creation of this scene of religious instruction, in which a secular female heroine effectively supplants the role of priest, also inverts traditional gender roles and suggests a mildly transgessive female leader compared to others in Puccini's operas, while remaining sufficiently conventional as a model of Catholic piety. The focus on redemption through love also inevitably ties the adaptation to another source of inspiration, namely Wagner, both *Parsifal*, in a more Christian-oriented understanding of redemption, and the Ring Cycle in which the theme is invested in female characters, Sieglinde principally, and Brünnhilde.[180]

The same year that *La Fanciulla del West* was premiered in New York, Umberto Giordano's *Il Mese Mariano* opened in Palermo. It presents a further example of adaptation expanding the religious context of a contemporary play, and one which prefigures Puccini's convent setting of *Suor Angelica* (which will be discussed in Chapter II), The Neapolitan playwright and poet Salvatore Di Giacomo was responsible for the adaptation of his own play, *O Mese Mariano!*, into a libretto for the pugliese Giordano.[181]

[180] Though women have no comparable function of teaching in Wagner's operas, where their wisdom is sadly ignored. This influence was acknowledged by Puccini in the interview given shortly after the Italian premiere, 'in una saletta d'albergo: con Giacomo Puccini', *La Gazzetta di Torino*, 11 November 1911, quoted in Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp. 291-292.
[181] Salvatore di Giacomo, *O mese mariano* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966)

Fig. 10 Umberto Giordano, *Mese Mariano* (1910) Synopsis

In the nursery of the royal workhouse, the children are being drilled in singing a hymn in honour of a visiting patroness, the Contessa. Following her arrival she is taken to see the Church by the Rector. A young woman, Carmela, arrives asking to see her son who was taken in by the workhouse two years before. She confesses to the Mother Superior the story of his illegitimacy and how her new husband forced her to give him up. One of the nuns goes to fetch him. Meanwhile, Carmela is shown the Church by another nun, who is a childhood friend. The nuns discover that Carmela's son has died during the night. They hide the news from Carmela, and say she can't now see him. The children walk past in the distance and Carmela thinks she sees her son. She leaves without meeting him.

While the narrative similarities between Giordano's opera and *Suor Angelica* have been remarked on before – a cast dominated by nuns, an unmarried mother whose child's death is discovered – little attention has been given to the way in which the adaptation by Di Giacomo radically alters the setting from a secular to a religious one, thereby transforming its operatic potential and social significance.

In the play, the orphanage functions as a critique not of religious charity but the efficiency of the secular state and its patriarchal figures. The hospital is overseen by Don Gaetano, who complains about the meanness of local voters in funding their needs, hence his resort to begging funds from the Illustrious Signora to whom he is busy writing an imploring letter. In the libretto it has become an institution run by nuns, who are all flattering the religious devotion of the munificent patroness, the Contessa, who visits the orphanage. The iconography of the play includes pictures of the King and Queen, which in the libretto are replaced by crucifixes and religious iconography, significantly a statue of San Gennaro, patron saint of the city. The only nun in the play is an unnamed 'sister' sent to find Carmela's son, who discovers that he has died of meningitis. The libretto instead peoples the stage with nuns, and nuns who have named singing parts, an innovation still in 1910. The interrogation of Carmela by the Mother Superior further prefigures *Suor Angelica*. The piety and

religious instruction of children is also given more space in the libretto – which introduces a chorus of children to sing a hymn of thanks to the visiting Contessa:[182]

> We are tiny, but we will grow!
> Always loving God and goodness!
> Pray for us!
> Pray intently!
> Let our hymn of love ascend to the Virgin![183]

As in the play, their hymn to the Virgin will return at the end of the opera as a pathetic counterpoint to Carmela's conviction that she sees her son among them as they pass by singing. To emphasise the religious character of their instruction, one girl recites a specially composed sonnet for the Contessa:

> To the noble and honoured lady,
> Who shines with a heart so pure,
> And who again has honoured us
> In gratitude we present our sonnet.
>
> Every child, every sister
> Is filled with joy in their breast!
> Today our home is happy!
> This is a day of praise and emotion!
>
> The sun is shining! In the earth
> each flower blooms and gives off its fragrance!
> And from Heaven, the Divine
> Creator blesses us all here below!

[182] In the play, the children do sing a Marian hymn at the end of the play when Carmela imagines she sees her son among them.
[183] “Siamo piccini, Ma cresceremo!/ Sempre ameremo Dio e la virtù!/ Preghiam per noi! Preghiam col cuor!/ Salga alla Vergine L'inno d'amore!"

And with us he blesses the zeal
Of your pious virtue![184]

The religious saturation of the setting therefore creates a wide range of types of female religiosity, from the benign authority of the Mother Superior and quite individual characterisations of the nuns, to the pitiable mother of an illegitimate child, ideas not attempted elsewhere in opera until *Suor Angelica* in 1918.[185] As with earlier adaptations of successful contemporary plays by famous authors, the impact of *Mese Mariano* failed to engage audiences and critics, despite these innovations.

[184] (See Appendix 1 Source 7)
[185] For a contrasting picture of an abandoned mother and illegitimate child in a very different context, see *Madama Butterfly*.

Giovanni Giannetti – Cristo alla festa di Purim

This section will conclude by considering two examples of *Literaturoper* in which the religious content and purpose of the source text was already foregrounded, and which both involved the original dramatist in their adaptation as librettos – Giovanni Giannetti's setting of *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* by Giovanni Bovio, and Franchetti's adaptation of D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Iorio*. Although neither could match the fame of the play on which it was based, both present original examples of male religiosity in Italian opera, as well as the question of adaptation involving original authors and the suitability of the religious themes for operatic adaptation. *Literaturoper*, as an approach to adaptation became more common at the end of the nineteenth century.[186] Jurgen Maehder, in his analysis of the beginning of Italian *Literaturoper*, restricts his definition to "opera based on a text that existed as a play before it was set to music by another person". He focuses primarily on the implications and challenges faced by composers using plays by Gabriele D'Annunzio, including La *Figlia di Iorio*.[187] Peter Petersen elaborates the definition of the term *Literaturoper*, which suggests more specific questions which can be applied to the adaptation of religious themes in these works:

> The term 'Literaturoper' refers to a particular form of music theatre in which the libretto is based on a pre-existing literary text (drama or narrative), whose linguistic, semantic and aesthetic structure is adopted in a musical and

[186] Debussy's setting of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas e Mélisande* (1902) and Strauss's 1905 opera of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* are often cited as milestones in this trend. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Dal dramma musicale alla Literaturoper* (trans. M. Giani) (Astrolabio Ubaldino, 2014). The connections between the religiously themed texts which were adapted as operas are significant. Bovio was involved in the first (aborted) attempt to have Wilde's *Salomé* read publicly in Italy. It was eventually performed just as the play of *La Figlia di Jorio* was premiered in 1904. The first Italian performance of Strauss's *Salome* was in Turin in 1906. See Rita Saveri, 'Astonishing in my Italian: Oscar Wilde's first Italian editions 1890-1952' in Stefano Evangelista (ed), *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2010) pp. 111-113.

[187] Jurgen Maehder, 'The Origins of Italian Literaturoper: Guglielmo Ratcliff, La Figlia di Iorio, Parisina, Francesca da Rimini' in Groos and Parker (eds), *Reading Opera* (Princeton, 1988) pp. 92-128.

> dramatic text (an operatic score), and remains recognizable as a structural level within it.[188]

The risks inherent in this adaptational strategy are clear, as the privileging of recent, celebrated texts, arguably restricts the musical and dramatic potential of the operatic whole, even more than the less direct adaptation of contemporary dramas discussed above. Though the text of each of these plays was radically different, the mode of their adaptation was strikingly similar, involving mostly direct transcription.

Bovio's play *Cristo alla festa di Purim*, written in 1893, immediately became one of the most prominent flashpoints in the culture war of Liberal Italy between the Church and the intellectual elite (see chapter V). Bovio, while clearly revelling in his notoriety as a scourge of the Church, was at pains to establish that the interpretation placed on the play, of Judas Iscariot as a socialist prophet at the expense of an ordinarily human Christ, was not his own.[189] The play was premiered at in Naples in May 1894, but then banned in Rome and many other cities following pressure from the Vatican and the intervention of Prime Minister Crispi.[190] Bovio adapted it into a libretto for the composer Giovanni Giannetti the following year, and it was taken up by Sonzogno for performance at La Scala in Milan, but it was withdrawn because of objections from the city, and as a result was premiered only in Rio de Janeiro in 1903 and its Italian premiere held at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in Turin in December 1905. Unusually at this point for an opera libretto, Bovio's adaptation of his play's text is largely a direct transposition of its prose form, apart from a number of minor excisions to reduce its length. The correspondent of Turin's *La Stampa* warned the public that the libretto contained many archaisms and obscurities, which meant they should take copies of the libretto with them to the premiere.[191] The one-act opera,

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[188] Peter Petersen, quoted in Geoffrey Chew, 'Literaturoper: a term still in search of a definition', *Studia Minora Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis* H 42–43, 2007–2008, p. 7.

[189] Michele Nani, 'Il Cristo di Bovio e il suo pubblico' in Carlotta Sorba (ed) *Scene di fine Ottocento: L'Italia fin de siècle a teatro* (Rome: Carocci, 2004) pp.176. Nani compares this interpretation to Italian patriots' over-interpretation of Verdi's operas as Risorgimento polemics.

[190] The issues of censorship and the reception of the play and opera are examined in different settings in chapters IV and V.

[191] Giovanni Giannetti, *Cristo alla festa di Purim di Giovanni Bovio* (Turin: Tipografia Matteo Artale, 1905); *La Stampa*, 4 and 6 December 1905).

whose climax is Christ's teaching in the Gospel of St John, saving a woman accused of adultery from stoning, "Let he amongst you who is without sin cast the first stone". In both the play and opera, the appearance of 'the Voice of Christ' is heralded by Maria di Magdala, who describes Christ's virtues in comparison to the worldly Romans and Pharisees for the ambivalent Giuda. The depiction of Christ's teaching is therefore both direct, and mediated by a female disciple (saint). Christ himself remains unseen onstage, shielded from view by the crowd round the Adulteress, something which was specified by Bovio in order to avoid controversy. Overall, we can judge that, as with other adaptations of philosophical texts, for example Goethe's *Faust* by Boito, the theological disputes and dialogue between Maria and Giuda, are downplayed in a libretto for music, with the dramatic depiction of the Magdalen, the unseen voice of Christ and the climax of the story, becoming a clearer focus.[192]

La Figlia di Iorio

D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Iorio* is a play so steeped in religious language and forms of speech and song that it feels like the peasants of the Abruzzo do little else but pray, intone litanies and invoke saints, blessings and curses. Even the temporal setting of the play is dictated by the religious calendar as much as the pastoral one.[193] As mentioned above, D'Annunzio had been inspired by the painting by his fellow Abruzzan Michetti entitled *La Figlia di Iorio*, which won first prize at the 1895 Venice Exhibition. One quality of the painting is an absence of any religious reference, focused as it is on the pastoral scene and the threatening leers of the drunken peasants towards the demure red-cloaked girl. Thus, the play text is already an adaptation into which religious speech and forms have been poured to overflowing. In order to give some idea of the extent of this in a play and opera largely forgotten today, beneath the image of Michetti's painting is a summary of the opera libretto.

[192] Though there is little evidence about the staging of the operatic adaptation of *Cristo alla Festa di Purim*, the designs for the premiere of Bovio's play were made by Domenico Morelli, whose influence is discussed below.
[193] Ettore Paratore, "La religiosità nella Figlia di Iorio', in *Nuovi studi dannunziani* (Pescara, 1991) pp. 255-264; Gianandrea de Antonellis, 'Gabriele D'Annunzio e la visione della religosità ne *La Figlia di Iorio'*, *Quaerere Deum, Rivista Semestrale di Scienze religiose e umanistiche*, No.3, June 2011, pp.59-78.

Fig. 11 Francesco Paolo Michetti, *La Figlia di Iorio* (1895)

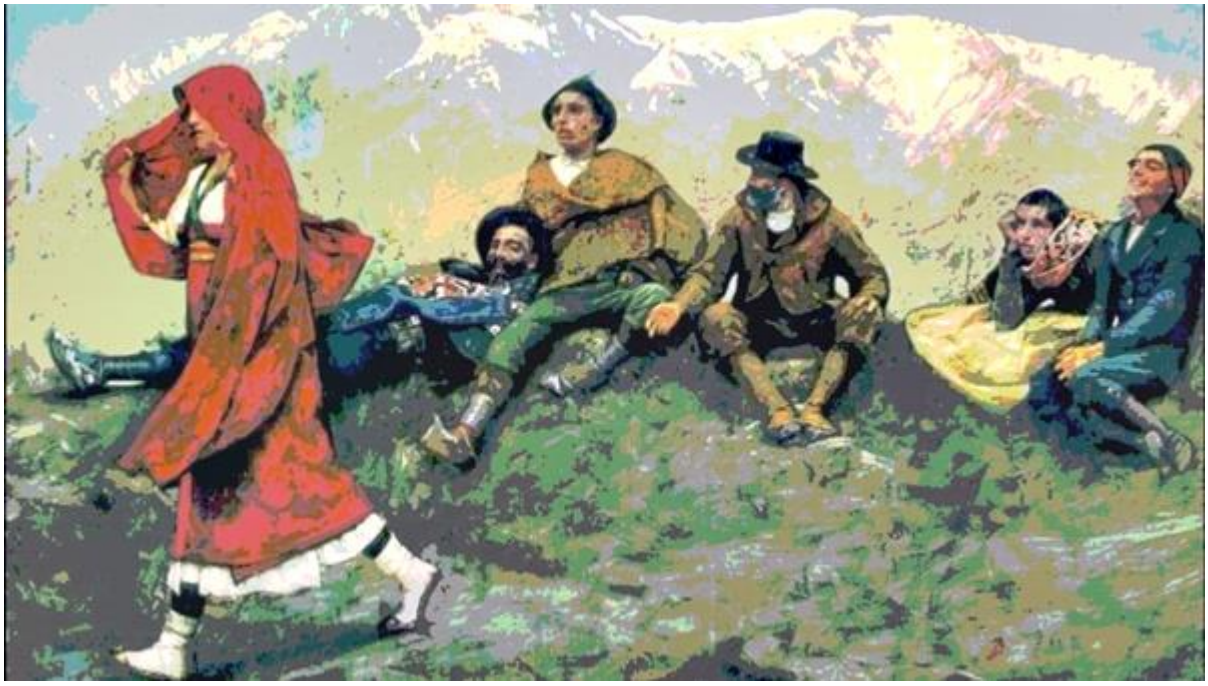

Fig. 12 Gabriele D'Annunzio, *La Figlia di Iorio*, Libretto Synopsis

Act 1: Inside the house of Lazaro di Roio (The eve of the Feast of San Giovanni)

Aligi's three sisters are dressing his bride, Vienda (mute in both play and opera). Aligi and his mother, Candia di Leonessa exchange blessings and are joined by a chorus of relatives. This is interrupted by the arrival of an unknown woman seeking protection at the hearth of a Christian house as a baptised Christian, as she is chased by a baying mob of reapers who want to rape her. They say she is a witch, the daughter of Jorio, infamous for being handed around the reapers and won in gambling and fights. As proof they warn that Candia's husband, Lazaro di Roio, will soon return wounded in such a fight for her.

At first Aligi leans towards throwing her out, encouraged by the relatives who are shocked by the sacrilegious intrusion on the wedding preparations. Mila seeks protection from Aligi's sisters, particularly Ornella who recognises in her a kindred bond and truthful heart. Aligi tries to strike Mila but sees behind her in the fireplace the protecting Angel. He drops to his knees and begs forgiveness. The chorus and family rejoice and sing Kyrie Eleison.

Aligi unbolts the door and commands the reapers to kneel before the cross and acknowledge Christ's protection of Mila. Suddenly, Lazaro di Roio arrives with a bloodied hand. Candia bewails what seems the truth of the reapers' story. The curtain falls as Mila eyes her escape.

Act 2: A Shepherd's cave in the mountains (Sometime in September)
Aligi and Mila have spent the summer hidden in the mountains. Aligi has carved the figure of the Silent Angel in the stump of a walnut tree. He intends to follow the pilgrims to Rome to seek forgiveness of their sins. Aligi and Mila express their love, and the crossbearer who leads the band of pilgrims blesses them.

While Aligi is called into the fields to tend an injured sheep, Ornella arrives, and Mila swears before God that she and Aligi have remained innocent. She and Ornella renew their bond of sisterhood and faith in the Virgin. Ornella asks that she allow Aligi to come home. Ornella leaves and Mila prays to the Virgin to bring her death.

Suddenly Lazaro di Roio enters the cave demanding Mila submit to him or he will take her by force. Aligi reappears and challenges him in the name of Christ, but Lazaro orders two fellow reapers to bind him and take him outside. Mila feigns her willingness hoping that Ornella will reappear. Lazaro attacks her and Aligi rushes in with an axe and kills Lazaro. Ornella appears, gazing in shock at the body saying that she untied Aligi.

Act 3: In front of the house of Lazaro di Roio
Lazaro's body is laid out inside the house, surrounded by his wife and two daughters, with wailing mourners intoning Requiem aeternam. Ornella sits under the oak tree watching the mountain path. The sound of tambourines heralds the arrival of Aligi, the penitent. Iona di Midia leads Aligi, who is veiled in black and manacled. Candia feeds him the potion of forgetfulness which will mask the pain of punishment for parricide – amputation of the hand, being sewn into a sack and thrown in the river. Mila arrives and declares her own guilt, saying she was inspired by the fallen Angel. The crowd willingly condemns her and releases the drugged Aligi. Ornella blesses Mila as her sister in Christ and the victim is taken off to be burned as a witch, ending with the words "The flames are beautiful".

The religious language, according to Gianandrea De Antonellis, is broadly distributed across the community in three types – the 'apropaic' (to ward off evil), 'superstitious' or 'pagan' – exemplified in the chorus of relatives; expressions of true faith spoken by Aligi and his sister Ornella; and a third category of ambiguous or magical religion seen in Mila di Codra – the daughter of the sorcerer Iorio.[194] Perhaps overlooked here is the language in which faith is apparently absent – that of Lazaro di Roio, who barely utters a religious oath and his main religious pronouncement is one of incomprehension at his son praying. As Paratore has commented, the tragedy also draws significantly on Wagner's *Parsifal* for its atmosphere, themes and devices – the theme of redemption through suffering, the ancient religious rites of the community, the protagonist who is passive and uncomprehending – Aligi as 'pure fool' like Parsifal. He also compares Mila and her relationship to Aligi with that of Kundry and Parsifal.[195] Particularly prominent though in the libretto, in which the role of the Chorus is augmented from the play, are the extracts of liturgical song, blessing and litany which the chorus and relatives intone. Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol has traced the ways in which D'Annunzio's verse drama was transposed into a form which Franchetti could set to music.[196] Most of the contemporary and scholarly critique of the opera, which after its La Scala premiere in March 1906, received only five performances at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome in April 1907, has characterised the adaptation as one in which the inherent musicality of the D'Annunzio's poetry was debased by mediocre music.[197] Franchetti made plain his intention of fidelity towards D'Annunzio's poetry, whatever the latter's characteristic protestations to the contrary. Act I largely preserves the dramaturgy of the original and the dramatist's meter. Whole passages are in fact preserved as written, for example the blessing exchanged between Aligi and his mother Candia:

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[194] Antonellis, 'Gabriele D'Annunzio e la visione della religosità nel *La Figlia di Iorio'*, p. 82.
[195] Paratore, 'La religiosità nella Figlia di Jorio', p. 259.
[196] Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, 'D'Annunzio e Franchetti: La Figlia di Iorio nel percorso da tragedia a libretto' in Giorgi and Erkens (eds), *Alberto Franchetti*, pp. 221-267.
[197] Corazzol, 'D'Annunzio e Franchetti', pp. 222-224; Rubens Tedeschi, *D'Annunzio e la musica* (Firenze; La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1988) p. 44; Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, pp. 255-256.

Aligi:
Praise be Jesus and Mary!
And you mother who gave me
This flesh baptised.
Blessed art thou mother
Blessed are you my sisters
Flower of my blood.
For you and me I place the cross
In the middle of the path so shall not pass
The false enemy, neither dead nor living,
Neither fire nor flame,
Neither posion nor curse…

Candia:
My own living flesh, I touch your forehead
With this bread made of pure flour.
I touch your fair forehead
I touch your chest free of cares…
Pray that Christ speaks to you and you hear him![198]

The dialogue is necessarily compressed throughout, and some of the *coralità* (choral function) of the minor characters re-assigned to the chorus of relatives. The introduction of the Mute Angel, which in the play Mila uses to establish her bond with Ornella, is delayed until the climax of Act I, when Aligi's vision of the Angel behind Mila prevents him striking her. Otherwise the litany of the Kyrie Eleison, in which the relatives join with Aligi and the sister's in recognising their protection of Mila, is preserved. The two most obvious expansions create more conventional operatic moments. Mila's prayer to the Virgin in Act II, demonstrates the purity of her faith, rather than her supposed witchcraft.[199] Most significant is the prayer given to the chorus of pilgrims:

[198] Play, pp. 16-17; *La Figlia di Iorio di Alberto Franchetti: Tragedia pastorale in tre atti di Gabriele D'Aunnunzio* (Milan: Ricordi, 1906) pp. 8-9 (See Appendix 1 Source 8)
[199] Paratore, 'La religiosità nella Figlia di Jorio', p. 261-262.

Hail Mary, over the mountain
we come to your font
to cleanse us from sin
in the stream of your grace…
Pray for us, holy Virgin,
May Christ keep us,
who reigns in Heaven
Over his suffering people! [200]

Rather than Aligi and Mila hearing their songs in the distance, they become a third voice in a concertato scene, expanding its role in a way not dissimilar to Mascagni's chorus in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. As Tedeschi says, Franchetti is provided with a classic love duet and choral intermezzo.[201] The play's more specific echo of *Tannhäuser*, in Aligi's plan to accompany the pilgrims to Rome and seek the absolution of the Pope, as the Shepherd of shepherds, is elided in the opera as his more general abortive idea to join the pilgrims – we get the bathos of the failure without the narrative of the pilgrimage. Mila's prayer to the Virgin, which in the play precedes the appearance of Ornella, is delayed until after their meeting. In conclusion, these more or less significant changes in the adaptation do shift the religious atmosphere of D'Annunzio's play, which obviously reflected his own idiosyncratic religious instincts, hardly conventional and often deeply transgressive. An operatic narrative, at least in models with which Franchetti was comfortable, could not comprehend the more primitive expressions of the community D'Annunzio had created, but steered the narrative towards something more acceptable to an opera audience, hence satisfying few.

[200] *La Figlia di Iorio di Alberto Franchetti*, pp. 27-28. (See Appendix 1 Source 9)
[201] Tedeschi, *D'Annunzio e la Musica*, pp.42-43.

Eroticism and religion in Biblical adaptations

The final section of this chapter considers a group of adaptations of Biblical narratives, which involve almost the opposite approach to these two examples of *Literaturopern*. The debate about the direction of Italian opera had been at least temporarily answered by the arrival of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1890, and the adaptation of naturalism to the lyric stage as 'slice of life' dramas charting the plebeian lives of stereotypes of the Italian poor. But as we have seen other avenues ran in parallel which took inspiration from different sources, though in hindsight these have been overlooked or judged as ephemeral in opera history. One of these was the increasing popularity of foreign adaptations of Biblical stories and early Christian martyr histories, which conflate religious ecstasy or conversion with eroticism and sexual obsession. These entail a different type of 'micro-adaptation' which I will examine through a few Italian examples and their foreign antecedents. Some of these were based on existing fictional retellings, like Flaubert's short story of *Hérodias*, and later Anatole France's novel *Thaïs*. Massenet's *Hérodiade*, premiered in Italy in 1883, showed how this process could highlight the relevance of ideas of religious liberty in the Bible story with modern concepts of political freedom, while excising the direct references to Jesus present in Flaubert's tale.[202] Where no such literary sources existed librettists and composers extrapolated from a mixture of Biblical verses and early histories of the Church. While these Italian adaptations follow existing trends for exoticist settings and eroticised relationships, they also, in common with the other sub-genres of adaptation discussed above, were still concerned to foreground conventional liturgical texts and religious characters.

While Massenet's popularity and influence grew, the German example of Goldmark's *La Regina di Saba* had already established a taste for orientalist, exoticised Biblical subjects since its Italian premiere in Turin in 1879, in a translation by Angelo Zanardini.[203] Zanardini was an example of a librettist particularly prolific in the

[202] Rowden, *Republican Morality*, pp. 88-110.
[203] Alberto Basso, *Il Teatro alla Città dal 1788 al 1936: Storia del Teatro Regio di Torino* (Turin: Casa Risparmio di Torino, 1976) pp.381—383. Zanardini had also provided a revised Italian translation for the four-act version of Verdi's *Don Carlos*. He also composed the Italian translation for Massenet's *Hérodiade*. On Massenet's reception in one Italian city, see

orientalist field. He also provided a new libretto for Ponchielli's *Il Figliuol Prodigo*, which was the first significant Italian example of such an adaptation when it was produced at La Scala in December 1880. Though the original inspiration for *Il Figliuol Prodigo* is the short parable in the Gospel of St Luke, the plot and dramatisation are based more directly on Scribe's libretto for Daniel Auber's own *L'Enfant Prodigue*, which premiered in Paris in 1850. Scribe had invented a whole grand opera world from the unpromising Biblical parable, in which none of the characters are named, nor the city to which the son repairs to indulge his lusts. The parable suggests little dramatic tension before the father runs to greet his son's return, and perhaps most importantly requires the invention of female characters to furnish the composer with a soprano (Jeftele) and mezzo-soprano (Nefte) to fulfil the roles of innocent betrothed to the prodigal son (Azaele) and his urban seductress.[204]

Zanardini's main elaboration of the setting (apart from including an *Orgia Sacra* among the dances) is the religious atmosphere which becomes more specifically Judeo-Christian. The setting of the 'Pasqua Ebraica', the Jewish Easter or Passover, frames the action in both Act I and the concluding Act IV, a context and a point of connection with the audience's own religious experience.[205] The choruses which open and close the opera celebrate this religious atmosphere, using text familiar from Catholic prayer:

Franke, *The Impact of Jules Massenet in Milan 1893 to 1903* (Northwestern University, PhD Thesis, 2014).

[204] Both operas replace the core story of the debauchery of the son with a conventional operatic quartet in which an Egyptian/Assyrian adventurer, Amenofi, and his companion Nefte, tempt Azaele to leave home. He is eventually condemned for sacrilege and thrown into a river, before finding his way home to his family who think him lost. The published libretto includes the full text of the Biblical parable in its preface. Azaele, in Jewish tradition, is derived from the name of one of the fallen angels, also used as the hero in Franchetti's opera *Asrael*. Scribe, *Il figliuol prodigo: opera in 5 atti: traduzione italiana di Benedetto Prado; musica di D.F.E. Auber* (Bologna: Stabilimento Tipografico G. Monti, 1871).

[205] Letellier, *The Bible in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017); Herbert Schneider, 'Scribe and Auber: Constructing Grand Opera', in David Charlton (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook to Grand Opera* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) pp. 178-179.

È la Pasqua del Signor
Laude a Jehova Creator!...
È la Pasqua del Signor!
Gloria! Osanna al Creator!

Ponchielli's adaptation attracted the praise even of Verdi who considered it a worthy contribution to the 1880 season at La Scala, but the increasing interest in literary and musical exoticist treatments of biblical subjects drew Italian writers and composers to more radical adaptations.[206]

Alberto Franchetti tantalisingly left uncomposed three libretti which afforded rich opportunities for exploring religious themes. The first of these, based on the life of Zoroastro, was penned by Ferdinando Fontana, the librettist for *Asrael*. Perhaps wisely, at least from a popular perspective, this was set aside to complete the *Cristoforo Colombo* commission. The second was Illica's libretto of Sardou's *Tosca*, which Franchetti found uncongenial for dramatic and poetical reasons discussed at length in the Puccini literature.[207] The third of these unrealised libretti was *Maria Egiziaca*, the libretto by Ettore Albini and Cesare Hanau (who provided the adaptation for Franco Alfano of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*), which was published in anticipation of completion of the score with Franchetti's name as composer on the title page.[208] As Richard Erkens has identified, the libretto drew on similar source material as Massenet's librettists for *Thaïs*, who were working concurrently.[209] These included Flaubert's 1874 novel *The Temptation of St Anthony*, and Anatole France's more recent *Thaïs*, as well as existing legendary descriptions of the life of Mary of Egypt. A further textual reference which is relevant in considering Franchetti's attraction to the subject is that Maria Egiziaca features in Goethe's *Faust* as one of

[206] Weaver, *The Verdi-Boito correspondence*, pp. 14-15; *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, 29 December 1883, profile of Ponchielli.
[207] Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp.151-152; Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*, pp.17-18.
[208] E. Albini and C. Hanau, *Maria Egiziaca - Leggenda Sacra in quattro atti. Musica del Maestro Alberto Franchetti* (Milan: Tipografia Capriolo e Massimo, 1893).
[209] Richard Erkens, 'Ungeschriebene Opern: Tosca und Maria Egiziaca von Alberto Franchetti' in Sieghart Döring and Stefanie Rauch (eds), *Musiktheater im Fokus* (Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2014 pp. 105-114. I am very grateful to Richard Erkens for pointing me towards this opera and the surviving copies of the libretto, as well as other helpful information regarding Franchetti and his circle.

the three penitent saints who pray to the Virgin Mary for Faust's forgiveness – lines which are inscribed in the title page of the libretto. In an interview with *La Gazzetta di Venezia* in 1894 about his plans for the score, Franchetti actually referenced *Parsifal* ("the most beautiful opera ever written") as its inspiration.[210]

> By the consecrated place
> Where the Lord's body lay:
> By the warning arm, against my face
> That thrust me far from the doorway…[211]

The operatic Maria Egiziaca and Thaïs follow a similar model – a legendary courtesan exhausted by the emptiness which her life increasingly represents, who finds release into religious ecstasy through an erotic confrontation with a male religious figure.[212] However, in taking the treatment of Maria Egiziaca much closer to Thaïs, Albini and Hanau greatly embellish the story of the life of the saint as handed down through existing sources and her myriad cultural representations, primarily to create the erotic tension necessary with the male lead. The saint is reputed in legend to have travelled to Jerusalem, paying her voyage by continuing to sell her body to those onboard ship. Saint Zozimas is a vehicle for her self-martyrdom in the desert and the preservation of her legend. In the libretto he becomes a figure more like Athanaël in *Thaïs*, the desert monk who leaves his monastery in an attempt to convert Thaïs. Once Thaïs is entombed in the desert convent, Athanaël becomes sexually obsessed with her and returns to find her dying revered by her community. Zozimas, however, is less culpable than Athanaël, as although he is responsible for bringing Maria to an awareness of Jesus and salvation, there is no sense of compulsion or coercion. However, when Zozimas later discovers Maria in the desert,

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[210] *La Gazzetta di Venezia*, 30 March 1894, 'Cronaca d'arte e dei teatri'. Franchetti also suggested it would be given in private performance because the risky subject was beyond the tastes of the public. "… dato l'argomento molto arrischiato e fuor dei gusti del publicco".
[211] Mary of Egypt's lines in Goethe's *Faust* end with a more direct reference to her desert penitence which forms the climax of the story in the libretto: "By my forty years' repentance/ Faithful, in that desert land:/ By the blissful final sentence/ That I wrote there on the sand." *Faust Part II*, 12053-12060.
[212] On the development of this operatic trope of a holy man tempted, see Rowden, *Republican Morality*, pp. 46-47.

he is torn between the austerity of his religious faith and his increasingly erotic obsession with the dying Saint.

Having already set Act II of *Cristoforo Colombo* aboard his transatlantic voyage of discovery, the two ship-bound acts which open *Maria Egiziaca*, should not have presented too great a problem for Franchetti. Maria cavorts with the passengers on board, though in a rather more chaste way than the legend of her naked and debauched journey. However, rather than waiting until her arrival in Jerusalem to affect her conversion, Zozima meets her on board the ship and begins her awakening so that she exclaims:

> Maria: *(transfigured)*
> Your dear word
> Lights up my spirit
> Love, love I desire
> I want to love your God![213]

Maria collapses helpless at the end of the Act, her state of mind uncertain. During Act III at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Maria is now fascinated by the Christian faith and its adherents. She demonstrates her virtue by rescuing Zozima from a brutal mob, but an unseen force prevents her entering the Church. The libretto constructs an elaborate concertato scene in which choruses of pilgrims and priests both outside and inside the church sing increasingly ecstatic '*Osannas*', while the crowd of gentlemen mock her and treat the procession and Church as an exotic spectacle, the backdrop for the increasing anguish of Maria and Zozima. Maria prays to the Virgin, the text for which (the libretto explains) is specifically taken from the *Invocazione alle Vergine* by the thirteenth century Franciscan Jacapone da Todi.[214] This releases her to enter the church in a scene of transfiguration while Zozima watches, "like in a dream, murmuring…"

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[213] "Maria (trasfigurata): L'anima mia rischiara/ La tua parola cara/ Amar, amar vogl'io/ Amar voglio tuo Dio!" Albini and Hanau, *Maria Egiziaca*, Act II, p.26.

[214] The life of Jacapone da Todi also contained parallels with these early Christian tales of mystical love and conversion between saint and sinner. He had lived a dissolute early life while his wife was reputed to be pious. He commanded her to watch a tournament where

She is saved, she is saved!
To God is drawn my love![215]

Act IV sees Zozima rediscover Maria in the Theban desert, as according to the legend, but rather than the pure relationship related by Christian tradition, he now wanders lost in the memory of his love for her like Athanaël in *Thais*. They meet and Zozima declares his love. Eventually unable to resist, she falls into his arms only for the stormy heavens to open and moonlight to illuminate a cross on stage, which prompts Maria to re-dedicate herself to the Lord and resist the temptation of the flesh. Exhausted, eventually she collapses and dies. Her body is illuminated by a halo and Zozima repents of his lust and asks Saint Maria Egiziaca to intercede for him with the Lord, an ending with a more religiously conventional ending than the despair of Athanaël at the end of the Massenet's *Thais*.

Thaïs	*Maria Egiziaca*
Athanaël (with a terrible cry, throwing himself to his knees in front of her)	Zozima (desperate and sobbing)
Dead! Ah, pity me![216]	(In bending to kiss her, he sees a halo of dazzling light form around her head. Her body totally shines with the light. He pulls back, amazed and trembling.) What rapture oh Lord! O beloved holy victim, I lie at your feet, Saint Maria Egiziaca

she died when the stand collapsed under her. His discovery that she had been wearing a hair-shirt to mortify herself because of her husband's sinful ways led him to renounce his life and set him on the path towards his holy life and works as a Franciscan monk. Given Franchetti's German and specifically Wagnerian influences, perhaps Tannhäuser's invocation of Saint Elizabeth is also a relevant echo.

[215] "È salva… è salva… A Dio/ la trasse l'amor mio!..." Ibid., Act III, p.46.

[216] « Athanaël: (avec un cri terrible, se jette à genoux devant elle) Morte! pitié! »

Pray to the Lord for me![217]

A further confluence between adaptations of Faustian themes of and these Biblical and early Christian stories is found in the opera *Il Santo* (1903) by Francesco Ghin. Ghin was a minor Venetian conductor and composer who set a libretto by Luigi Sugana, on the subject of St. Anthony of Egypt.[218] Completed in 1898, the opera received its premiere at Teatro La Fenice in 1903.[219] Like Mary of Egypt, St Anthony's hermetic life and temptations in the desert were the subject a number of Renaissance paintings, including one which inspired Flaubert's novel, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, which was published in 1874.[220] Sugana's introduction to the score of *Il Santo*, outlined his approach to fusing these influences:

> Moulded in part from a few of the main episodes of the life of Saint Anthony the Doctor, without using a named demon, the Mephisto, clearly drawn in its romantic-germanic form, without being specific, but consequently more generic and variable. In my opinion there are many indications, many aspects of the Hebrew and, thereafter, protean Latin Devil, which perhaps respond better to the intimate feeling of *oriental fantasy* which, at the time of Christ came into conflict. Thus, it was added to over the millennia through tradition, popular legend and the genius of mediaeval art.[221]

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[217] Zozima (disperatissimo, singhiozzando) (nel piegarsi, per baciarla, scorge un aureola di luce abbagliante formatasi intorno alla testa di Maria. Il corpo di lei ne è tutto splendente. Si ritrae stupito e tremante). Qual prodigo, O Signor!/ O d'amor santa vittima,/ Io mi prostrò a tuoi piè…/ Santa Maria Egiziaca,/ Prega il Signor per me!

[218] *Il Santo, Opera Mistica di Francesco Ghin. Leggenda di Dott. L Sugana*. (Venice: M.S. Compositori Tipografia, 1898). Sugana, from Treviso, was a friend and collaborator on his Goldoni adaptations with the better-known Venetian composer Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari. Alan Mallach mistakenly suggests Sugana worked as a librettist only with Wolf-Ferrari, despite the evidence of his work with at least Francesco Ghin on *Il Santo* (Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, p. 228).

[219] *Il Santo* was given as part of a Spring season combined with *Il Trovatore*, which Ghin promoted himself, subsidised by the Venice Council for the Biennale, at which it was given a gala attended by the King and Queen of Italy (See chapter IV).

[220] It is not clear to what extent Flaubert's novel was a direct influence on *Il Santo*. Though Flaubert's *Hérodiade* had been an inspiration within the broader literary decadent movement in France for Massenet's operas *Hérodiade* and *Thaïs*, the direction of *Il Santo*'s narrative suggests it was not used directly as a source. For Flaubert's influence on Massenet see Rowden, *Republican Morality*.

[221] *Il Santo*, p. 5. (Emphasis added) (See Appendix 1 Source 10)

The opera poses Anthony against real and ideal versions of ‘The World’ (Valerio Publio and Satan), ‘The Sensual’ (Zamir and Idea) and ‘The Spirit of Christianity’ (Anthony's sister Maria and The Angel). In Act 1 Anthony gives his sister Maria over to a group of Christian virgins to take the veil. He gives away all his money and is therefore unable to buy the freedom of the Venus-like Zamir, who captivates him, from the slavery of the Roman general Publio who carries her off. Leading the Christian community into the desert, St. Anthony is faced with infernal temptation in Act II, led by Satan, details of which are drawn from Fra Domenico Cavalca's translation of the *Latin Lives of the Desert Fathers*, which includes a chapter on St. Anthony. Act III sees Anthony in his cave, prostrate at an image of the Cross, in which he has a vision of the dying Christ. He implores God to end his life. Satan reappears and conjures one more vision – this time the alter ego of Zamir ‘Idea’ – who appears from under his sleeping mat. In a series of endnotes to the libretto, which reference classical history and early Christian symbolism and mythology, Sugana says that the scene is inspired by Domenico Morelli's *Temptation of St Anthony* (1878).[222]

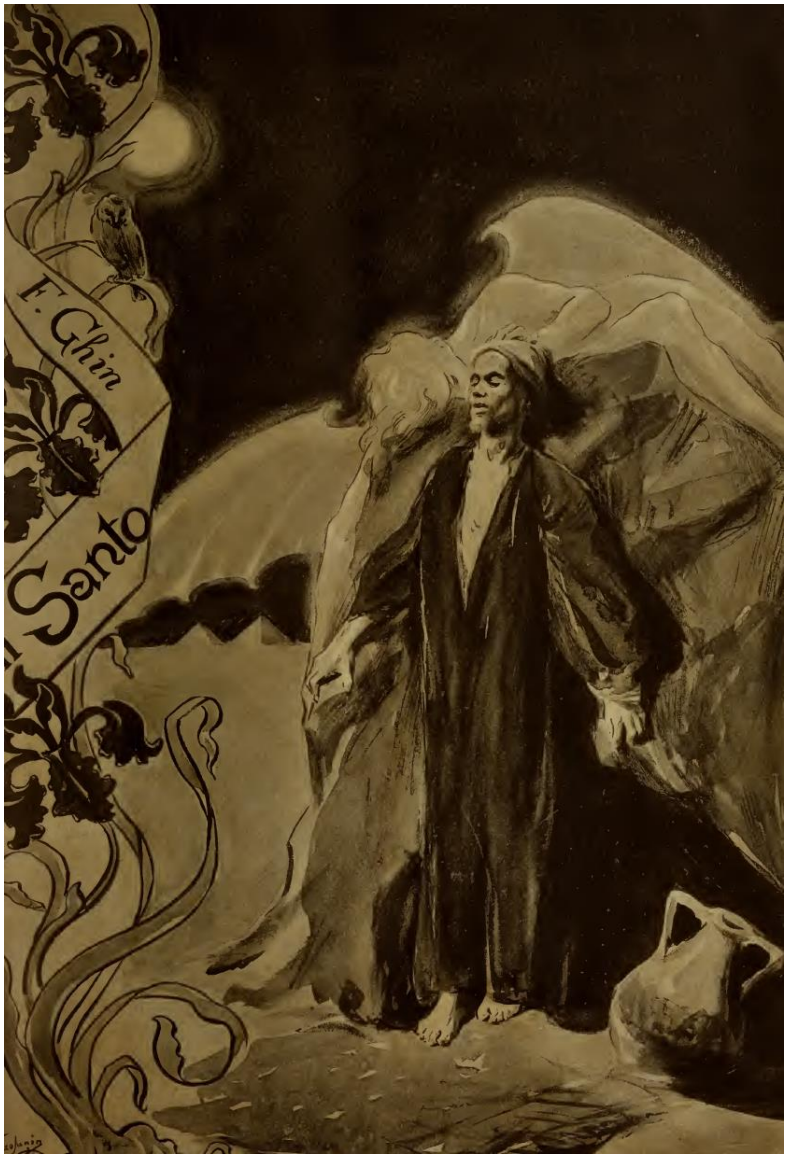
[222] The influence of Morelli's increasingly symbolist religious art can be seem in artists including Giacomo Grosso whose painting *Il Supremo Convegno* caused scandal at the first Venice Biennale competition, discussed in chapter IV. The competition was won by another of his pupils, Michetti for *La Figlia di Jorio*.

Fig. 13 Domenico Morelli *Le Tentazioni di Sant'Antonio* (1878)

Despite this very Latin-looking model for St. Anthony and other Caucasian, European images of mediaeval and Renaissance images of St. Anthony, the cover illustration for the libretto depicts a saint of a more African ethnicity, standing arms open before his cave, suggesting a more exoticised portrayal of the saint perhaps, or alternatively a reflection of a liberal attitude towards race during this period of colonial adventure in North and East Africa.[223]

[223] Although the libretto does not attribute the image of St Anthony, it does state that Luigi Sugana himself designed the sets and costumes, which suggests at least that this depiction of the saint is consistent with his conception.

Fig. 14 Libretto Frontispiece, Francesco Ghin, *Il Santo* (1898)



Anthony's temptation ends with the arrival of the chorus of penitents, and the scene opens up to the stairway to heaven, a battle between angels and demons, again drawn by Sugana from particular mystic traditions and the book of Genesis, and a celestial vision of angels and archangels, led by the angelic alter ego of Anthony's sister Maria, welcomes Anthony among the company of saints, suggesting the influence of Boito's *Mefistofele* and Franchetti's own imitation of it, *Asrael*. While the chorus of penitents sings a vernacular hymn, the celestial choir sings the 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' in Latin.[224]

My final example draws together several of the themes of this chapter. *La Tentazione di Gesù* (1902), with a libretto by the poet Arturo Graf, was composed by Carlo Cordara. The thirteen verses from St Luke's Gospel on Christ's temptation in the wilderness are expanded to create an operatic drama which references a similar brew of operatic and literary traditions including, again, *Faust*, but also exoticism, conventional liturgical forms and depictions of the celestial.[225] Most innovatively, Christ becomes a visible protagonist. A reviewer of the premiere in Turin in 1902 reflected that the elevated mystical, oratorical text suggested to him Wagner's *Parsifal,* and he noted that the subject and its seriousness were far from the "intrigues of love", which presumably readers expected somewhere in an opera.[226] The reception of this remarkable work will be further discussed further in Chapter III. Yet the adaptation elaborates the staging of the visions which Satan produces for temptations of 'love', 'power' and 'riches' to include a "seductresses' dance" for which the following stage direction gives: "Passing slowly in the distance, erotic visions of beautiful women dancing, crowned with flowers".[227] This is followed by a "vision" of Calvary, where, Satan predicts, Christ will call for him. In return, Christ

[224] This celestial resolution to the story is far removed from the ambivalent ending of Flaubert's novel.
[225] Carlo Cordara, *La Tentazione di Gesù: mistero lirico in un atto di Arturo Graf Riduzione per Canto e pianoforte* (Firenze: Mignani, 1903).
[226] 'La Tentazione di Gesù: mistero lirico in un atto di Arturo Graf. Musica di Carlo Cordara', *La Stampa*, 15 October, 1902, (initials i.a.v). The reviewer also compared the work to Cesar Franck's oratorio *Les Béatitudes.* This work had been completed after a long gestation in 1879 but was not premiered in public until 1893. Although Franck's oratorio, setting a text by Joséphine Colomb, does juxtapose the characters of Christ and Satan, they are never in dialogue. For further discussion of the influence of Arturo Graf in the culture of Turin, see chapter III.
[227] "Passano lentamente, alquanto da lungi, immagini lascive di bellissime donne coronate di fiori e danzanti. Mollmente cadenzato come una danza orientale."

dismisses him with the quotation “Get thee behind me Satan”. This is where Graf’s original poem concluded, but for the operatic setting, Christ then sings the words of the Lord’s Prayer and opera concludes with an off-stage celestial choir singing “Glory to God. Peace on Earth to Men”.[228] The adaptation therefore encompasses a range of quite contradictory tropes, both progressive in its daring personification of Christ, yet also conventional, using exotic dances to counterpoint the orthodox religious message and use of offstage celestial choir, referencing familiar liturgy and operatic traditions including Faust and Wagner.

Conclusion

Religion became a more dynamic and expressive tool of operatic language in adapting texts as libretti from the 1860s onwards. The weakening of restrictions in formal censorship was crucial. As well as facilitating the more explicit staging of religious rites, texts and characters, it offered new opportunities to reinterpret canonical texts of literature, whether novels or plays, and respond to new movements in literature and poetry like the Scapigliati, ‘verismo’, exoticism, Wagnerism, and later the decadentism of D’Annunzio. While primo ottocento modes of female religiosity were limited, the Catholic social revival during the second half of the nineteenth century, and the orientalist turn, offered diverging depictions of feminine piety which were no longer focused solely on romantic qualities and the stoic devotion of the Catholic-Liberal school, but suggested either their active place in the world, or an exoticist, sexualised temptation. In the increasing attraction of the Magdalene figure these apparent contrasting tropes could be combined. Many of the examples in this chapter support this argument, but previously overlooked has been the ways in which adaptations also expanded the view of male religiosity beyond anticlerical stereotypes or oppressive patriarchal models.

Many of the adaptations which created space for religious rites and prayers introduced a new framework of intertextuality into libretti, for example the Te Deum in *Tosca*, which in the context of Liberal Italy can be seen to reinforce conventional

[228] As discussed in chapter III, it is not clear who added the Lord’s Prayer and celestial chorus, but Graf attended the premiere so his support would indicate he had made the changes himself.

religious values. However, equally important in this question of intertextuality is the the influence of contemporary drama. Many of the tools we find in libretti – prayer forms, litanies, and liturgical rites – remained consistent during this period, which, as expectations of musical innovation increased, suggest a ‘retarding’ effect on the work’s religious implication. The following chapter will turn to look at how composers responded to these changing conditions of representation of religion as musical ‘markers’.

Chapter II – The Operatic Markers of Religion

> … the other evening I went to hear *Mefistofele*… I had been told that the Prologue in Heaven was a burst of inspiration, of genius, but hearing the harmonies of that number, based almost always on dissonances, I thought I was in […] surely not heaven. You see what it means not to be *dans le movement!!*[229] (Giuseppe Verdi to Count Arrivabene, 30 March 1879)

Introduction

In 1879, Verdi's response to the celestial music from Boito's *Mefistofele*, strongly suggests a set of preconceptions about what 'heavenly' music should sound like.[230] Verdi himself remained largely impervious to supernatural effects within his operas, the notable exception within the scope of this project being 'the Voice from Above' during the *Auto-da-Fe* scene in *Don Carlos*.[231] The music from the 'Prologue in Heaven' forms, in Jay Nicolaisen's words, the three enormous pillars on which the score is constructed, as it is reprised at the death and salvation of Margherita at the end of Act III, and in the Epilogue at the death and redemption of Faust. Apart from the dissonances of the '*armonie celeste*' which so disturbed Verdi, what are the operatic markers for the 'heavenly' that we find in this section of *Mefistofele*? A brass fanfare motif, a Gregorian chant-derived woodwind theme, harp arpeggios, a hidden, divided chorus dispersed spatially beyond sight, interpolated liturgical text with organ

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[229] *Verdi intimo: carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene, 1861-1886 / raccolto e annotato da Annibale Alberti; con prefazione di Alessandro Luzio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1931) p. 226.

[230] Verdi's ironical slight on the 'Prologue in Heaven' in this letter, about a younger contemporary's work, should be read in the context of other later evidence about Verdi's good opinion of *Mefistofele*, including the fact that Verdi lobbied to overcome Boito and Ricordi's hesitance to propose *Mefistofele* for La Scala in 1881 when the theatre was in need of new blood; and as reported by Amilcare Ponchielli to his wife in a letter following a visit to Verdi in 1885, about some, but by no means all parts of the opera. See Weaver, *The Verdi-Boito Correspondence,* pp. 14-15, 82.

[231] Two earlier examples which offer slightly different versions of the supernatural are *I Lombardi* and *Macbeth*. In Act IV of *I Lombardi* in which Giselda has a dream in which she is shown a vision of Oronte who reveals the location of a spring which will sustain the Crusaders, which she then declares a miracle rather than a dream. In Macbeth, Banco's ghost appears in Act II.iii and in Act III.i the witches summon three visions for Macbeth in Act III, including the reappearance of Banco's ghost.

accompaniment, a final accelerating massing of sound with foreshortening strings moving between duple and triple time.[232]

Fast-forward half a century. Fifty years after the 1868 premiere of *Mefistofele*, Boito's only completed opera was still a mainstay of theatres as Italy emerged from the Great War.[233] Within a year of its latest revival at the Teatro Costanzi in February 1918, the same theatre saw the 'homecoming' of Puccini's *Il Trittico* which was premiered in New York in December that year. The middle portion of the triptych, *Suor Angelica*, concludes with the oft-derided miracle scene, in which the eponymous nun has taken poison and dies, having seen an ecstatic vision of the Virgin Mary reuniting her with her dead illegitimate son. The miracle is achieved in the score through means including a celestial chorus moving invisibly nearer, harp and piano arpeggios, organ, bells, and extracts from the litany *Salve Regina*. The verdict on the premiere by the American critic James Gibbons Hueneker was that this scene was nothing more than "an illuminated Christmas card".[234] Its Italian reception was more generous, but the same effects were described rather coldly as "old conventions", "more cinematic than mystical" and "*real* music" lacking in true drama.[235]

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[232] As Jay Nicolaisen concludes in his analysis of the Prologue, "… the cumulative effect is stunning. It is a nineteenth-century Heaven, but one in which we are made to believe, if only for a moment. With its divided chir, its wide range of dynamics, its imaginative harmonies, and above all its careful rhythmic pacing, it outdoes Meyerbeer, its spiritual parent." Jay Nicolaisen, Italian Opera in Transition (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1980) p.138.

[233] The history of the fiasco of the Milan premiere of *Mefistofele* and its eventual triumph in Bologna in 1875 and Venice in 1876, following Boito's reworking of several parts of the score, has been minutely covered, for example Jay Nicolaisen, 'The First "*Mefistofele*"', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1978), pp. 221-232. As Nicolaisen confirms from his analysis of the autograph score and the surviving libretto of the first version, the 'Heavenly Music' was part of this original score, and the Prologue received the greatest approbation at the time.

[234] James Gibbons Hueneker, 'A World Premiere of Puccini Operas', *New York Times*, 15 December 1918.

[235] Quoted in Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007) p. 180. *Suor Angelica*, despite being Puccini's favourite panel of *Il Trittico*, was the first to be regularly dropped from performances, reflecting this critical and popular uncertainty about the musical and dramatic world it depicted. Puccini was himself initially dissatisfied with the lack of unreality at this point, asking the designer Antonio Rovescalli to introduce some haze during the Intermezzo so that the action in the miracle scene afterwards would be less clearly visible, see Cinzia Giambertoni (a cura), *Antonio Rovescalli: pittore di scene (1864-1936)* (Milan: Studio Erre, 1986) p. 100.

As we shall see in this chapter, while representations of religion and the supernatural proliferated in opera in Liberal Italy, the tools with which composers chose to depict them remain strikingly consistent over a period of half a century. Many of them indeed derived directly from operas earlier in the nineteenth century. Attempts at more progressive, innovative solutions to connote the sacred and the religious can be found even before *Suor Angelica*, but their validity was often questioned, or they figure in minor or neglected works, attempting a more progressive style which failed to find a lasting audience. This chapter maps the spectrum of compositional and dramaturgical tools which Italian composers used during this period to characterise both material manifestations of religion, and the diabolical, the celestial and the divine.

I will position these 'markers' within discourse about music that is 'heard' within the stage world, distinct from the music which is 'unheard' by characters on stage. Since Claudia Gorbman first formalised an analytical model between diegetic and non-diegetic music in film a veritable industry within film studies has arisen, within which the validity and application of these concepts has been refined and questioned, often suggesting that a neat distinction or dichotomy between the two sound worlds is too simplistic, and instead within a spectrum of musical narrative effects lie ambiguities where the most interesting effects can occur.[236] Robynn Stillwell has termed this space the "fantastical gap" between the diegetic and non-diegetic, apposite for this chapter's discussion of our operatic markers of religion.[237]

Applying such divisions between the 'heard' and 'unheard' sound within lyric drama, 'diegetic' music being that which is heard as such by the characters in a performance, and 'non-diegetic' music, which in the context of opera is taken as the musical language in which the 'narrative voice' of the composer is established, offers similar ground for debate and interpretation. Depending on their interpretive scheme,

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[236] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: narrative film music* (London: BFI Publishing, 1987); Kassabian has argued that: "The distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic music…obscures music's role in producing the diegesis itself." Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing film: Tracking identifications in contemporary Hollywood film music.* (New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 42.

[237] Robynn Stillwell, 'The fantastical gap between diegetic and nondiegetic' in D. Goldmark, L. Kramer & R. Leppert (Eds.), *Beyond the soundtrack: Representing music in cinema* (Berkeley: UCP, 2007) pp. 187-202.

opera scholars have reached different conclusions about where different musical examples sit within this framework.[238] Carolyn Abbate, in *Unsung Voices*, analyses the way in which the distinction between the narrative voice of the composer – 'noumenal' music – and 'phenomenal' music, which is heard on stage, was maintained quite rigidly in the earlier nineteenth century, and then challenged and often dissolved by Wagner.[239] As developed by Gary Tomlinson, these labels resonate in opera's inherently unstable and mysterious deployment of the human voice to create a metaphysical as well as material world.[240] Marco Beghelli coins the phrase "cantar cantando", '*singing* singing' to ask; "how does the audience know that at certain points a character in an opera moves from '*speaking* singing' to '*singing* singing'?[241] He suggests there three signals are involved – visual, verbal and musical. Luca Zoppelli has analysed the different uses of 'stage music' in Italian repertoire of the *primo ottocento* according to their dramaturgical meaning and purpose, rather than addressing the question of stylistic consistency or disjuncture between the composer's idiom and the voice of the characters. His categories are also a good starting point also for considering later repertoire.[242]

Zoppelli's categories begin with the 'denotation of an event' or arrival on stage using music which the characters hear as music, whether actually visible onstage, or just as often, heard off-stage. We could contrast the on-stage *Te Deum* from Act I of *Tosca* with the off-stage cantata in Act II. Zoppelli's second category is the repeated use of stage music as 'emblematic' of a character or group, which was deployed particularly in the earlier period to characterise the religious groupings in the operas of Meyerbeer, for example the quotation of the Lutheran chorale 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' in *Les Huguenots*.[243] As the century progressed this technique of 'othering' an individual or group established the idea that musical language could

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[238] See for example the comparative analysis of the framework in opera and film by Robbert Van der Lek, *Diegetic Music in Opera and Film: A Similarity between two genres of drama analysed in works by Korngold* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991, pp. 27-33).
[239] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the 19th Century* (Princeton: PUP, 1992) pp. 97-155.
[240] Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, p. 4.
[241] Marco Beghelli, *La retorica del rituale* p. 558. Emphasis added.
[242]Luca Zoppelli (trans. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker), 'Stage Music in early nineteenth century Italian Opera', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, (March 1990), pp. 29-39.
[243] See also, for example, Julian Rushton, 'Characterisation' in Greenwald (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook to Opera*, p. 339.

depict religious identity as a variant of local colour or exoticism. A third variation or intensification of this effect are ‘points of view and focalisation’, where the audience is directed to see events through the perspective of a character. Zoppelli’s final two categories relate to the musical structure of an opera – its ‘musical continuity’, which in the early nineteenth century was still dependent on the alternation of closed numbers with recitative, when the quality and style of the music could sag while the action was moved on. Stage music could provide one way to avoid this effect. By the late nineteenth century, with the innovations of Wagner, through-composed opera largely obviated this need. Finally, the ‘temporal structure’ of opera, in which real time is suspended during lyrical numbers, could be contrasted with the real time of stage music to heighten dramatic effects and psychological changes of mood.

As we will see in this chapter, the musical markers of religion remained remarkably consistent, but their deployment, through composers’ integration of diegetic and non-diegetic music, building on the precedents of Meyerbeer and Wagner in particular, was one way in which to achieve new modes of expressing religious meaning.
This chapter will map these compositional strategies through a typology of the prominent religious tropes in opera which connote both material and supernatural manifestations of religion. The first group of these are liturgical scenes which import or simulate religious rites. The second is a selection of characterisations of religious figures, principally priests, monks and nuns, and the religious life of the cloister. The religious life in opera inevitably gives way to the religious death, and I will examine scenes of death and transfiguration which are given a religious colouring through their musical language. Finally, I return to the depiction of the supernatural – the diabolical and the celestial, and more progressive attempts to stage the divine, including Jesus Christ as an operatic character.

My analysis underlines that these compositional choices were made within the context of Liberal Italy’s complex political and social evolution. The persistent ecclesiastical defence of ‘clerical dignity’ in the theatre, despite the end of official censorship, washed into the wider Catholic revival and receptivity to the reflection of conventional Catholic models in opera. Advocates for positivist ideas and the emerging social sciences reinterpreted the religious duality of good and evil through a rationalist lens to consider questions of criminality and social responsibility, which

then afforded new material for operatic tropes. Finally, questions of mortality and transcendence opened windows beyond the material through music, which appealed to both rationalist and religious minds.

The sacred onstage (and off-stage) – liturgical scenes and stage music

This section considers some examples of the interpolation of liturgical music, rituals and scenes in opera and evaluates how far compositional choices about the musical integration of diegetic or 'stage music' changed, and the dramaturgical impact of these choices. These encompass a range of types of borrowing, from quotation of existing religious music (the example of the Lutheran chorale in Les Huguenots being the most obvious model) including hymn tunes and plainsong chant, to more frequent allusion to aspects of contemporary or archaic musical styles.[244] It will focus in detail on the finale of Act I of *Tosca* and consider new evidence about the musical and dramaturgical integration of the liturgy within the staging and musical score. The finale of Act I of *Tosca* is a useful starting point because it is one of the most seminal operas to employ 'genuine' liturgical material in a prominent position. Puccini's approach will be contrasted with a number of other operas to illustrate my hypothesis that there is an innovative aspect to the use of liturgical music in this period, as it moves from a colouristic effect towards a device that drives the stage action.

[244] I draw here for my analysis on Peter Burkholder's categorisation of types of borrowing. See J. Peter Burkholder, 'Allusion', 'Quotation', 'Borrowing' in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001).

Fig. 15 Examples of scenes including liturgical music and staging

Composer	**Opera**	**Scene**	**Italian Premiere**
Fromenthal Halévy	*La Juive*	Act I 'Te Deum'	1835
Alberto Franchetti	*Cristoforo Colombo*	Act II Finale 'Salve Regina'	1892
Alfredo Catalani	*Loreley*	Act II Preghiera, Epitalamio and Act III funeral litany.	1890
Ruggero Leoncavallo	*I Medici*	Act IV Credo	1893
Giacomo Puccini	*Tosca*	Act I Finale 'Te Deum'	1900
Francesco Cilea	*Gloria*	Act III 'Magnificat'	1907
Pietro Mascagni	*Cavalleria Rusticana*	Easter Day 'Regina Coeli'	1890
Antonio Smareglia	*Cornill Schut/ I Pittori Fiamminghi*	Act III Easter Vigil and morning 'Cristo è risorto!'	1930 (composed 1893/revised 1917)
Franco Alfano	*Risurrezione*	Act I/Act IV 'Cristo è risuscitato'	1904
Umberto Giordano	*Siberia*	Act III Finale 'Cristo è risorto'	1905

Censorship had made direct references to the Church or the use of liturgical text or music highly problematic in the *primo ottocento*, and informal censorship, as I discuss elsewhere, continued to have an important effect into the 1890s. The use of the *Te Deum* by Verdi in *La Battaglia di Legnano* (Rome, 1849) and Halévy's *La Juive* (Paris, 1835) are exceptions which could both be said to proof the general rule. As Andreas Giger points out, Verdi's status overcame censorship in the former, while the latter only reached Italy, as *L'Ebrea*, in 1858 with a premiere at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa. *L'Ebrea* had its Roman premiere only in 1871, after the city's fall to

the new State.[245] The '*Miserere*' scene in *Il Trovatore* exemplifies the way in which Verdi's compositional strategies negotiated the censorship regime. Martin Chusid argues that, despite the textual limitations on using Latin and the additional censoring for both religious and moral content made for the Rome premiere, the construction of the scene shows how Verdi could still use musical devices to connote a religious atmosphere, and relate the monk's off-stage chant (for example its homophonic texture and plagal cadence) to the broader '*tinta*', or musico-dramatic, structure of the scene.[246] Audiences, with whom this number was immediately the most popular in the whole opera, could readily relate hearing just 'Miserere' to its various liturgical uses as a prayer for the dead. In illuminating the tortured psychological state of Leonora during the scene, the death bell which intones throughout, the orchestral accompaniment also derived from a death march, and the repeated use of the word 'Miserere' as the *parola scenica* during the ensemble, show how this suggestion of liturgy works as an example of Zoppelli's category of focalisation and character psychology.

Fromenthal Halévy – La Juive

Of earlier liturgical scenes I give more weight here to *La Juive* than *La Battaglia di Legnano*, because, as *L'Ebrea,* Halévy's opera remained popular in Italy into the first decade of the twentieth century, whereas *La Battaglia di Legnano* was not among Verdi's early period operas which were much revived during his lifetime, despite its patriotic associations.[247] The most obvious innovation is that in previous examples the *Te Deum* is intoned by a *coro interno*, off-stage in the Cathedral, while the main action occurs outside, with soloists and on-stage chorus. These examples seem more of a 'decorative frame', the deployment of local colour or the 'emblematic' connotation described by Zoppelli, which is juxtaposed with the lines of the soloists

[245] Andreas Giger, 'Social Control and the Censorship of Verdi's operas in Rome' in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3 (November 1999) pp. 250-251. As I also discuss in chapter V, the Roman premiere of *L'Ebrea* in the Carnival season of 1871 continued to be controversial for its ecclesiastical content.
[246] Martin Chusid, *Il Trovatore: The Quintessential Italian Melodrama* (Rochester: URP, 2012) pp. 78-81; Giger, 'Social control', pp. 251-253.
[247] *L'Ebrea* was among those grand operas of the *primo ottocento* to which critical opinion in Italy tired in this period, though this and shades of antisemitism in some Catholic responses to it failed to dent its popularity with audiences. See chapter V.

and on-stage chorus, but not integrated with them. In *La Juive*, the first lines of the *Te Deum* open Act 1 and then return at its conclusion, some forty-five minutes later, a clear signal that we are being given an example of local colour, rather than an attempt at a realistic liturgical rite.

The scoring of the off-stage *Te Deum*, organ and string accompaniment in the rhythm of the chant, is contrasted with the on-stage forces returning to the celebratory idiom of the rest of the music, with the on-stage chorus singing "Osanna! Honour and Glory to the Great Emperor!"[248] Notably, between statements of this theme the orchestra plays four bars in an archaic style reminiscent of a baroque or classical cantata. The canticle again breaks through at the end of the first scene following the introduction of Rachele and Eléazar and their condemnation as heretics by the crowd, with "Pleni sunt coeli et terra*!*" emanating from the inside Church. In the following passage, as Leopoldo and Alberto set the scene of the Council of Constance, the ostensible reason for performing a Te Deum, the chorus breaks through again with "In te Domine, speravi", and this time the two men acknowledge "the sacred hymns", their lines of recitative layered over the chorus. The final return of "Te Deum laudamus" from inside the Church (a liturgical solecism in repeating the opening line), breaks through in the final chorus as the people's exultation of the Emperor reaches a climax, moving from onstage chorus and orchestra to off-stage choir and organ, before returning for a final statement by the choir of "Osanna all'Imperator!". Again, the liturgical music is isolated as local colour, importing a different sound world, and stretched or distorted. Act IV of *La Battaglia di Legnano* opens with an off-stage Te Deum in Milan Cathedral, for male voices and organ which sets the scene for the patriotic conclusion of the opera. Verdi overlays the off-stage choir with Lidia's prayer and the onstage chorus's response, giving a semblance of rhythmic and melodic relationship between them.[249]

[248] Fromenthal Halévy, L'Ebrea: Opera in cinque atti poesia di Eugenio Scribe, traduzione in Italiana di M. Marcello. Opera completa per canto e pianoforte (Milan: Ricordi, 1922) pp. 146-148.
[249] Verdi, *La Battaglia di Legnano riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, 1850) Act IV.i.

After unification, the official censorship which had assailed earlier compositions was reformed and primarily targeted prose drama and popular theatre. However, its application was inconsistent, and there is strong evidence, largely ignored by scholars until now, that opera continued to suffer both official and unofficial censorship even during the 1890s.[250] Once this atmosphere had decidedly shifted, the parameters for liturgical scenes broadened and created opportunities for more creating more intense effects in the work of the *giovane scuola*. Change was glacial though. In the transitional period, one step on this path this might be traced in the revision to Ponchielli's *I promessi sposi*, which he made with the librettist Emilio Praga in 1872, to their original 1856 score which had failed to find success. Among the changes which, as Cheskin argues, intensified the atmosphere of 'mansuetudine' characteristic of Catholic-Liberal operas, was the addition of a Te Deum to frame the concluding scene in the Lazzaretto prison.[251] The Latin text is sung by a 'coro interno' as convention dictated. After the death of Rodrigo, Fra Cristoforo leads the surviving betrothed couple and the chorus in a rousing vernacular hymn of praise "Benedetto il Signor!", which the coro intorno emerges onstage to amplify the principals and lay chorus ("sortono processionalmente"), which concludes with grand harp arpeggios.[252] Only during the 1890s can we trace a range of compositional and dramaturgical strategies which adapt these earlier models.

Alberto Franchetti – Cristoforo Colombo

Many of the most prominent examples of liturgical scenes by the *giovane scuola* continued to be in what William Ashbrook described as 'historical verismo' and which copied more closely the models like *La Juive*. The first of these is the finale of Act II of Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo*, in which monks and crew intone the *Salve Regina*, and the conquistadors work themselves into a mutinous state against Colombo, the genesis of which was discussed in Chapter I. Although disparaged as an attempt at an epic Italian grand-opera just as the genre was dying, it does present

[250] See chapter V in particular.
[251] Cheskin, 'Catholic-Liberal Opera', pp. 99-112.
[252] Amilcare Ponchielli, *I Promessi Sposi: melodramma in quattro parti* (Milan: Ricord, 1872) pp. 279-280, 290-296.

a powerful operatic example of liturgical music simultaneous with the plotting of evil intent, which we will see as a recurrent structure in succeeding examples.[253] The end of the second act presents a liturgical scene as a comforting, positive, and even miraculous force, through which is woven the conspiracy to lynch Colombo by the knights. Here, I want to augment the earlier discussion of the text with some observations about Franchetti's compositional choices.

The scene opens as one ship's bell is answered by another, heralding an orchestral prelude in fugato form with the tune of the chant as its theme. The monks emerge from below decks to lead the people in prayer for the Evening Service, intoning the *Salve Regina*, to which the people respond with the final line of the prayer "o clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria".[254] The chant is taken up in fugato form by the orchestra and counterpointed by the conspiracy among the conquistadors, all unaccompanied in parlando style, until a brass restatement of the *Salve Regina* tune is the cue for the mutiny to break through the prayer. On the point of being lynched, Colombo sights land, returning the crowd, Colombo and the monks to the religious focus, ending their hymn of exultation and the Act ends with the crew marvelling at the vision on the horizon while the monks alone intone in Latin "Gloria in Excelsis Deo!".[255] Though working in this style of 'historical verismo' when we examine the plainsong chant which Franchetti uses for the *Salve Regina* we find it is almost an exact quotation of a contemporary chant.[256]

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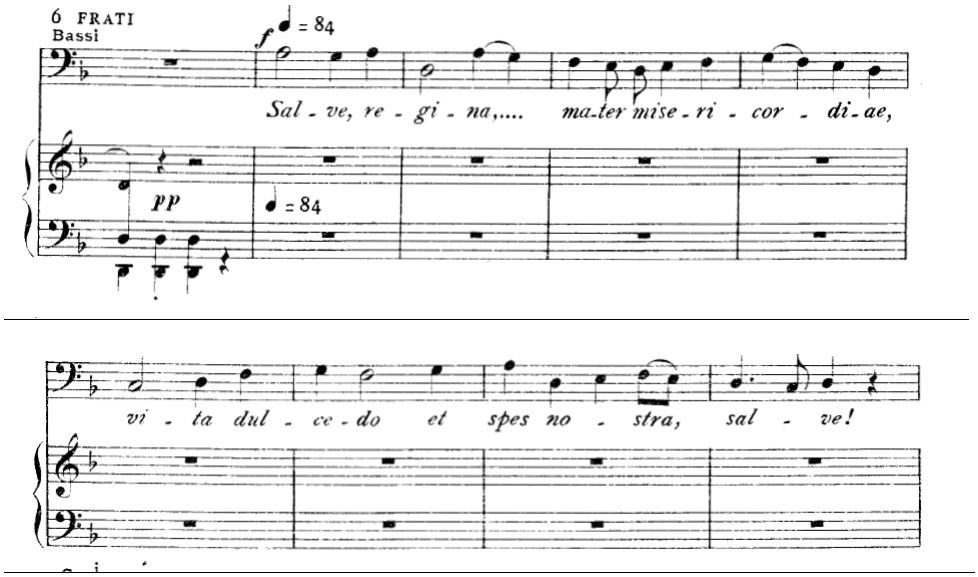
[253] For example, Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy*, p.247; Luca Zoppelli and Arthur Groos, 'The Twilight of the True Gods: "Cristoforo Colombo", "I Medici" and the Construction of Italian History', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Nov., 1996), pp. 251-269.

[254] As mentioned in chapter I, and as in *La Juive* and *Gloria*, we see the liturgy being stretched and manipulated.

[255] Verdi commented to Ricordi on the event of the premiere of Colombo: "Ah, Franchetti loves a spectacular mise-en-scene? Different from me, who detests them. What is necessary, and nothing more. With the grand mise-en-scene one always ends up doing the same thing ... bass drum and cymbals ... masses of people ... and farewell drama and music!! They become secondary." As Verdi had only relatively recently finished tinkering with versions of *Don Carlos* in which he and his librettists had enthusiastically dramatised the *auto-da-fé* scene to provide a suitable grand-opera climax to Act III, this comment seems uncharitable, if not disingenuous. Letter to Ricordi, 10 October 1892, quoted in Zoppelli (1996) p. 257.

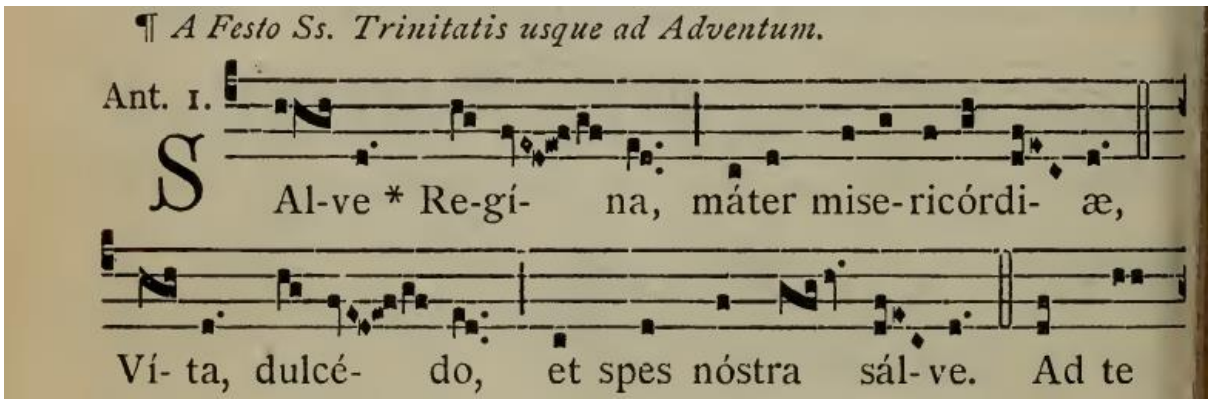
[256] Zoppelli and Groos, 'The Twilight of the True Gods' p. 268

Fig. 16 Franchetti, *Cristoforo Colombo*, Act II, Scene VI. 'Salve Regina' [257]



The Liber Usualis published in 1903 gives this version of the *Salve Regina* for use at Compline during the Feast of the Trinity and during Advent.

Fig. 17 *Salve Regina* plainsong chant (1903)[258]



Though shorn of the melisma in the original, this quotation of a chant which the devout among audiences for Cristoforo Colombo would recognise offers an intriguing interpretation on the 'veristic' use of liturgical music and effects in opera. Rather than adapting archaic but often anachronistic tunes to connote times past, as composers

[257] Luigi Illica e Alberto Franchetti, *Cristoforo Colombo, Opera completa per canto pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, 1893) pp. 207-208.
[258] *Liber Usualis* (Rome: Tornaci, 1903) p. 92.

such as Meyerbeer had done, or researching 'authentic' liturgy as Puccini did for Tosca, Franchetti weaves a familiar plainsong chant through the scene.[259]

Alfredo Catalani - Loreley

A useful comparison with this style of quotation could be made through Alfredo Catalani's *Loreley* (1890). Catalani's absorption of Wagnerian orchestral techniques alongside Italian lyricism was viewed with considerable promise until his early death.[260] In *Loreley*, the eponymous siren causes the destruction of the newly-married Anna as her beloved is tempted away at the point of their marriage. Three scenes of religious music demonstrate the subtle ways in which Catalani used liturgical styles and combined diegetic and non-diegetic music. Act II includes a Marian prayer led by Anna off-stage in church with her maidens listening and echoing her outside on the steps. The maidens even refer teasingly to Anna as "Ave Anna Maria!", parodying a chant. A simple organ accompaniment adopts a calm homophonic style. However, the shape of Anna's prayer 'Ave del mar o stella!' is then taken up by Hermann (who encouraged the faithful Walter to pursue his wedding despite also being in love with Anna himself). He sings a descant over the female voices in a paen of love for Anna.[261] Later, an Epitalamio (a wedding song drawing on ancient classical forms) is sung off-stage in the Church by choirboys. It is preceded by harp arpeggios in the orchestra but also on-stage bells. The melody imitates plainsong rhythms while the orchestra suggests ecclesiastical sounds like the pealing of bells.[262] In the final Act III, while the chorus murmur a litany for the dead, the orchestral music again alludes to plainsong, for example through its insistent mournful motif, and later imitation of polyphonic progressions in the style of Palestrina.[263] These examples show how Catalani creates a sonic impression which

[259] The same *Salve Regina* chant was later quoted by Ildebrando Pizzetti in his incidental music for D'Annunzio's play *La Nave*, which was premiered at Teatro La Fenice in 1907. Pizzetti uses the chant as the opening melody for a chorus of sailors, to which respond seamstresses singing the Vespers hymn 'Ave Maria Stella', using the first four notes of the same chant's as a motive. See Ben Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and musical modernism in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013) pp. 48-50.
[260] See for example Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi vol.3*, pp.286-291.
[261] Alfredo Catalani, *Loreley: azione romantica in tre atti di Carlo D'Ormeville e A Zanardini. Opera completa per canto e pianoforte riduzione di Carlo Carignani.* Act II, pp. 123-128.
[262] Ibid., pp. 170-177.
[263] Ibid., pp. 216-221.

blurs the boundaries between stage music and the orchestral sound-world, using liturgical styles sparingly in vocal and orchestral textures and juxtaposing conventional markers of heavenly purity, like the harp, with the diegetic sound of church bells.

Ruggero Leoncavallo – *I Medici*

The year following the premiere of *Colombo*, Leoncavallo's *I Medici* offered a further monumental work which used a liturgical scene as a climax, when the concluding Act IV set in Florence Cathedral sees the murder of Giuliano perpetrated at the end of the Credo of a Mass. The first instalment of a putative trilogy whose concept was consciously modelled on Wagner's *Der Ring des Niebelungen*, Leoncavallo also wrote the libretto and mined a range of Renaissance historical and literary sources on the Medici and the Renaissance, references to which litter the libretto.[264] While the male priests and boys of the choir sing the Credo, joined for the responses by the women of the congregation, the plotters discuss their plan and incite the men in the congregation to join them. At the top of the concertato, Fioretta, Giuliano's lover who has just informed him she is carrying his child, sings a personal prayer of confession. When the Credo is finished, the organ begins the Sanctus and a bell is rung for the benediction at which point Giuliano is murdered. Zoppelli and Groos's comparative analysis of *Colombo* and *I Medici* argues that in both these operas Franchetti and Leoncavallo "oscillate between attempts at historical restoration, a generic exotic effect and the imposition of a modern, 'authorial' register". They concludes that the religious service in *I Medici*, in which the musical themes of the conspiracy are super-imposed on the words of the Credo, is one of the few effective passages of synthesis in either opera between different motifs and identifiable existing musical forms.[265] Yet despite Leoncavallo's apparent slavish devotion to historical sources, the way he approaches the religious music is very different from

[264] *I Medici: azione storica in quattro atti. Parole e musica di Ruggero Leoncavallo* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1893). The libretto includes the nice anticlerical historical detail that two priests were chosen to commit the murder of Lorenzo (who escapes) because they lack the scruples of the soldiers ("due preti che i tuoi scrupoli non hanno"), p. 56.
[265] Zoppelli and Groos, 'The twilight of the true Gods', p. 268.

Franchetti's, as his 'authorial register' dominates over the recreation of 'authentic' stage music.[266] An antiphonal division of priests and divided congregation uses loosely allusive plainsong for the priests, but the harmonies are tonal and the polyphony of the responses is stylistically that of Leoncavallo's score. There are no suggestions of archaism. Two innovative aspects of the scene are its location inside the Church rather than viewed from outside as with earlier examples, and its simulation of real time during the service, in which the whole Credo is sung, the device which gives the scene a semblance of realism. The first of these innovations is less radical than it appears, as the clergy celebrating Mass remain unseen in the Sacristy which is beyond the view of the stage and they sing from the wings, thus preserving the continuing sense in the 1890s that clerical dignity in stagings of 'church' scenes was still problematic. The division between the seen and unseen is reinforced by the stage direction that the curtain rises only when the choir reaches 'Qui propter nos homines'. Although it has been suggested, without evidence, that Leoncavallo might have composed the Credo in his youth, its musical atmosphere seems driven by the dramatic action it frames, opening with a highly sinister-sounding 'Credo in unum Deum', lightened by passages of tranquillity in which the off-stage boys choir and on-stage women of the chorus predominate.[267] At 'qui propter nos homines' when the curtain rises, the conspiratorial tone returns as the plotters discuss their plan. This intensifies after the entry of Lorenzo de Medici at 'Credo in Spiritum Sanctum' as the congregation is incited to join the attack. This section climaxes with the entry of Fioretta's lyrical, soaring prayer 'Signor prostrata in lagrime io ti confesso', over which the choir sings the final lines of the Credo now bolstered by the heavenly sounds of a harp, and the conspirators bide their time until the signal to strike. Fioretta's prayer so dominates the music of the Credo at this point, despite being a private monologue directed to God, that it could be viewed as an angelic inversion of Scarpia's own interjection in the Te Deum of *Tosca*.

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[266] *I Medici: azione storica in quattro atti. Parole e musica di Ruggero Leoncavallo. Riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1893).
[267] Konrad Dryden, *Leoncavallo: his life and works* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2007) pp. 209-10.

Giacomo Puccini – *Tosca*

The Act I finale of Tosca, indeed shows a further development in the use of liturgical music, and that religion might be more than just a 'decorative frame'. Even in the most obvious sense, the scene goes far beyond the incremental changes which had seen more explicit renderings of liturgy on stage in the 1890s. It is undeniably the first onstage depiction of an interior Church liturgy in Italian opera, something often unremarked.[268] The scene is often cited as the most emblematic instance of 'verismo' opera revelling in the contrast of the sacred and the profane. It is generally analysed as the authors' expression of their anticlerical sentiment, through the depiction of the oppressive papal regime and revolutionary characters, with Scarpia's "Tosca you make me forget God!" ("Tosca, mi fai dimenticare Iddio!") heightening the sense of religious bigotry. According to Alan Mallach, "politics and religion in Tosca are merely the decorative frame within which the real story […] of predatory sex, gruesome violence, and intrigue takes place […] the implicit connection drawn between Scarpia's religiosity and his brutal sexuality lends the opera a distinct anticlerical aura".[269] John Davis has suggested that, as well as Puccini's own religious scepticism, this could be taken as a reflection of the continuing currents of Church-State controversies in Rome around 1900.[270] Chapter V will re-examine the reception history of *Tosca* in Rome to suggest an alternative reading of the scene in the context of Rome at the time of its premiere. This is supported by my interpretation of Puccini's music in this chapter.

Before *Tosca* Puccini had already exploited liturgical musical styles, including the quotation of pre-existing sacred music of his own, and its function as, and beyond, diegetic music. His first opera, *Le Villi* (1884), includes a '*preghiera-coro'* led by the secular, priestly figure of Guglielmo, father of Anna, whose betrothed Roberto asks

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[268] Verdi's *Stiffelio* in its uncensored form would have beaten this by some fifty years, though it is a less elaborate staging or recreation of liturgy.
[269] Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, p.141. Mallach also quotes Martin Clark's observation that "it is noteworthy how 'official, how 'bourgeois', anticlericalism was in the late nineteenth century'". Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871 to the present 3rd edition* (London: Routledge, 1984) p. 108.
[270] Davis, 'Anticlericalism in Italy at the turn of the century' in Burton, Nicassio and Ziino (eds.), *Tosca's Prism: three moments of Western cultural tradition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004) pp.135-146

Guglielmo to give him his blessing as he departs on his travels. The father then leads them in prayer to the Virgin to keep him safe, 'Angiol di Dio!'.[271] This borrowed the first bars of the vocal line of Puccini's own recently composed *Salve Regina*.[272] The borrowed melody itself is more lyrically romantic than liturgical, but allusion to more conventional sacred music is suggested through the imitative entries of each vocal line and the string accompaniment. In Act I of *Edgar* (1889), the hero and the Venus-like gypsy Tigrana argue outside the Church while inside the organ prelude quotes the Kyrie from Puccini's own 1880 Mass. The couple's vocal lines mimic the rhythm and melodic lines of the church music they are hearing.[273] As David Rosen has pointed out, in Act II when Tigrana reminds Edgar of his previous physical devotion to her, the orchestra recalls the organ prelude which played during their previous confrontation.[274] Rosen describes this borrowing as a "double-desecration" of Puccini's own religious music, first by the composer and then by the wicked Tigrana, though Puccini might plausibly have rejected such an irreligious motive. More importantly it also presages in *Tosca* the contrast between the sacred and the profane through Tigrana's mocking of the churchgoers and Edgar's own moral qualms, as well as foreshadowing Puccini's use of motivic material to suggest the diegetic remembrance by characters of music heard previously as stage music and heard non-diegetically by the audience. In Act III, the atmosphere for Edgar's faked funeral procession is set by Puccini's use of modal inflections, particularly in the plainsong-like melisma in the main theme which ripples through both orchestra and the chanting of the monks' chorus of the Latin text.[275]

In *Tosca* Puccini makes the Te Deum rite in the church interior the culmination of the Act I Finale, but now it is centre-stage, both in terms of the meticulous staging of the procession and its integration with the score in which the pulse of the music sets the tempo in the style of a solemn rite. It could also be said to be happening in 'real time' and the surrounding action falls into place around it. As Michele Girardi has argued,

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[271] Puccini, *Le Villi: opera-ballo in due atti di Ferdinando Fontana; riduzione di Carlo Chiusuri* (Milan: Ricordi, 1884). Act I/v, 23+9-27.
[272] Puccini, *Salve Regina: per soprano ed organo; testo di Antonio Ghislanzoni* (Albano Laziale: Boccaccini & Spada, 1999).
[273] Puccini, *Edgar*, Act I, 15 to 17.
[274] Ibid., Act II, 12. Rosen, 'Pigri ed obesi dei', pp. 283-288.
[275] Puccini, *Edgar*, Act III, 3-5.

Puccini's intimate understanding of the structure of Gregorian chant allowed him to fashion the intonation of the lines of the *Te Deum* so that the rite concludes on the chords of the Scarpia theme.[276] This foregrounding of the liturgy is also clear from the instrumentation in which the organ is predominant while bells toll the rhythm and triads of the main theme. This association between the music of the *Te Deum* and the Scarpia theme has often been used to support the idea that Scarpia's religious bigotry and sexual sadism implicates the whole religious atmosphere of the *Te Deum*.[277] Girardi, Rosen and Vandiver Nicassio concur that anticlericalism drives the construction of this scene.[278] As Scarpia awakes from his fantasy about possessing Tosca, he exclaims "Tosca you make me forget God!", then, with "religious fervour", he joins the choir and people in singing "Te aeternum. Patrem omnis terra venerator!"[279] However, the interplay of Scarpia's fantasy with the religious procession can suggest a less complex reading of the scene.

The evidence for how the Te Deum was first staged and sung in *Tosca* is unclear and sometimes contradictory. The implications for how the music interacts with the staging are profound. I will consider six different sources:

- The 'Ordine della Marcia' in the Ricordi archive;
- the stage directions from Illica's libretto;
- Hohenstein's design for the interior of the Church;
- Leopoldo Metlikovitz's watercolours of the original production;
- early reviews of the original staging;
- a surviving *mise-en-scène* or production manual from an early French production of 1911, authorised by Ricordi;[280]

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[276] Michele Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp. 167-169.
[277] Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome,* pp. 159-168.
[278] Vandiver Nicassio has found that the integration of Scarpia's lascivious monologue with the Deum caused the librettists much grief, leading to Giacosa's resignation, see Ibid., pp. 157-161.
[279] A faint suggestion of Scarpia's rhetorical blasphemy can be read in Roberto and Anna's duet in Act I of *Le Villi*, when Roberto, then echoed by Anna, sings "Doubt God but do not doubt my love! ["Dubita di Dio,"] *Le villi: opera-ballo in due atti, libretto Di Ferdinando Fontana; musica di Giacomo Puccini* (1858-1924) (Milan: Ricordi, 1905).
[280] ASCR, *Tosca Mise-en-scène by M. Albert Carré* (Ricordi Parigi, 1911). Although the handbook is dated 1911, it is possible this staging had already been developed, as Carré directed the first French production of Tosca in 1903.

- the 2015 recreation of the Hohenstein designs in the production by Alessandro Talevi for Teatro dell'Opera di Roma.

As Vandiver Nicassio observes in her survey of the materials in the Ricordi archive, "the procession order for the Te Deum was planned in meticulous detail".[281] The catalogue number for each figurino representing each class of official within the procession corresponds to a place in the cortège. The libretto's stage directions and the score flesh out some of the action at key points during the procession:

[281] Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*, p. 167. ASCR, ICON013613, 'Ordine della Marcia nell'Atto I'.

Fig. 18 Stage Directions for Te Deum procession. *Tosca*, Act I Finale.

Bar number	Stage direction	Text
1125	The crowd gathers in the rear, waiting for the Cardinal; some kneel and pray,	
1129		Scarpia: Tre sbirri…
1242	The Cardinal and his retinue advance to the high altar: the swiss guards make room for them in the crowd, which moves to either side of the procession.	
1243		Scarpia: Va! Tosca!
1261	Scarpia bows and prays as the Cardinal passes.	
1263	The Cardinal blesses the crowd, who bow reverently.	The Chapter: Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini People: Qui fecit coelum et terram.
1287	The worshippers turn towards the high altar; some kneel.	
1289	Scarpia remains motionless, looking into space.	People: Te Deum Laudamus
1301		Scarpia (kneels, and prays with religious fervour): Te aeternum… People: Te aeternum…

Yet neither of these solves the question of how the staging works within Hohenstein's set designs. These, presumably made after the completion of the libretto and score, do not specify a high altar, though the way in which he faithfully reproduces the interior of Sant'Andrea della Valle implies the high altar is far upstage right (away from the audience), in fact beyond view. Metlikovitz's watercolour shows Scarpia kneeling in front of the people, all turned upstage towards the procession.

Fig. 19 ASCR, Adolfo Hohenstein, *Tosca* Act 1 bozzetto, La Chiesa di Sant'Andrea della Valle.

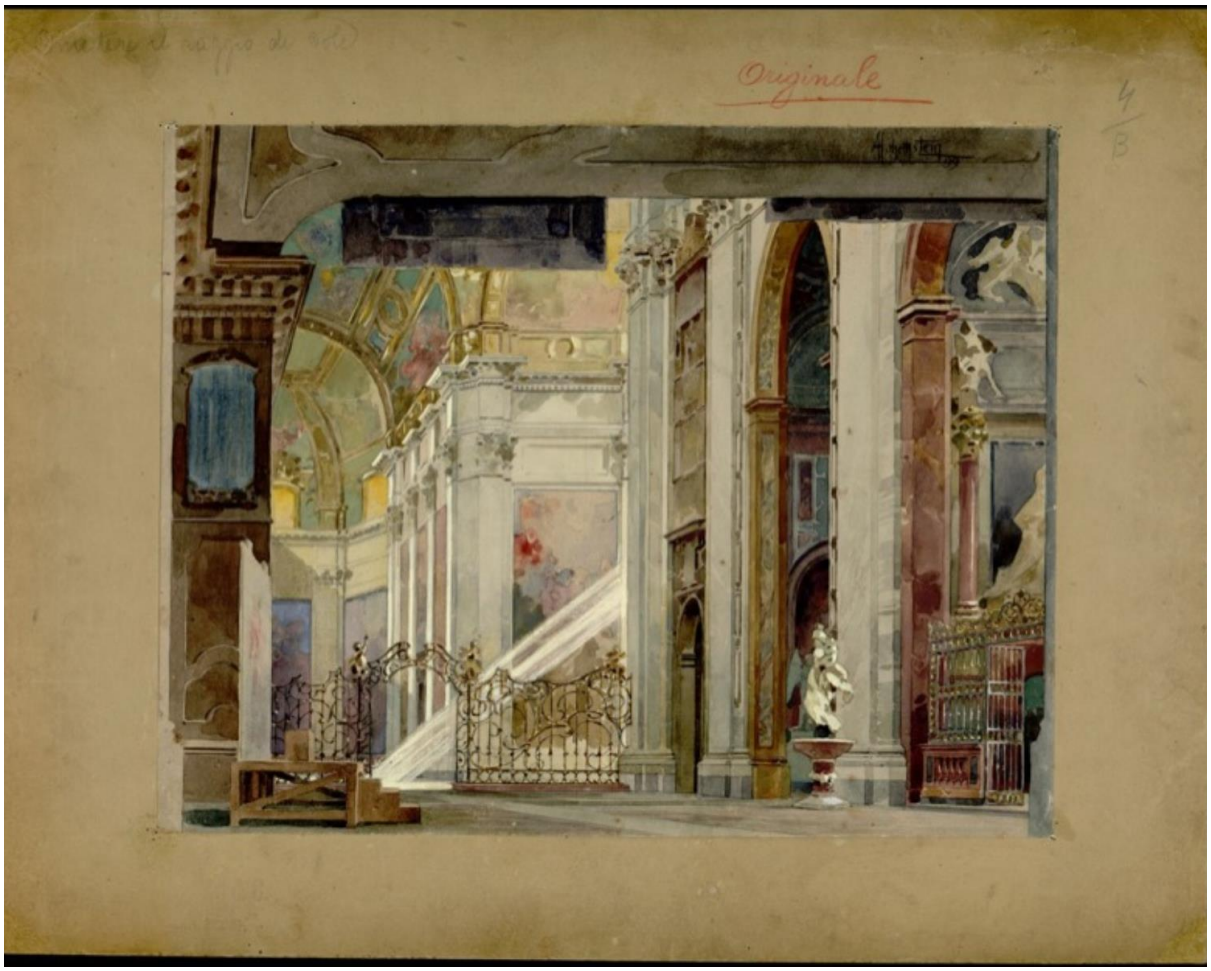
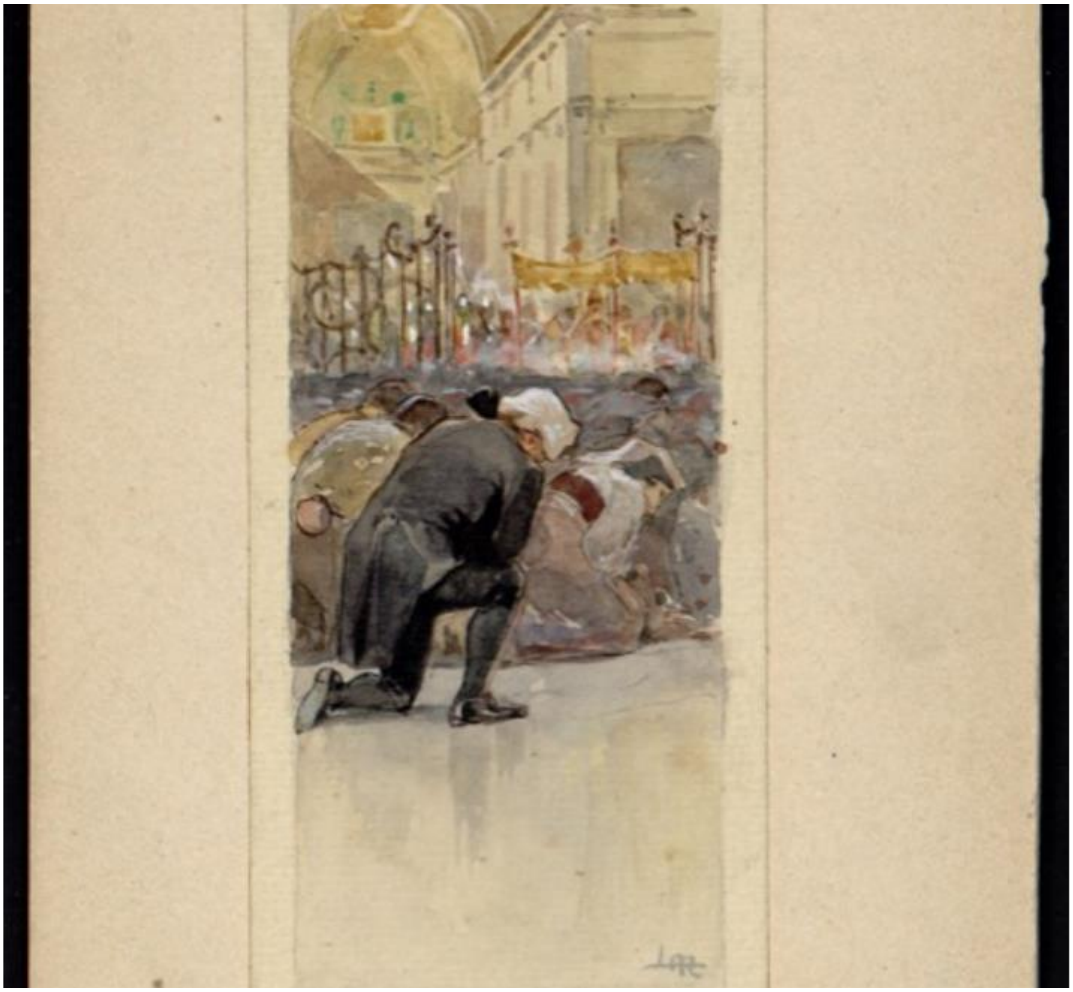


Fig. 20 ASCR, Corteo del Te Deum, Scarpia inginocchiato, Watercolour by Leopoldo Metlikovitz

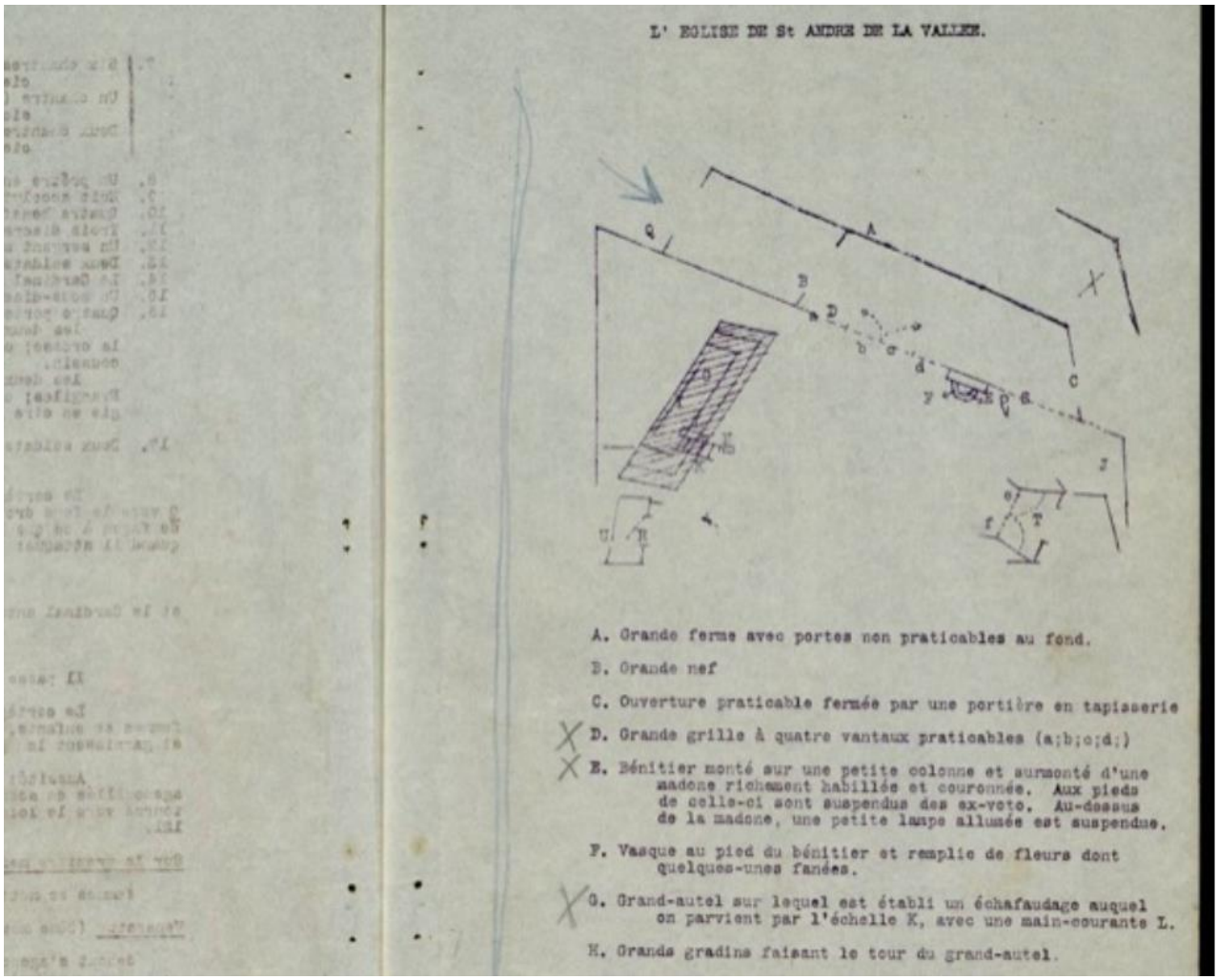


Yet it is not clear whether this represents the beginning of the procession or the end. Though the stage directions do not specify where the procession begins, the watercolour suggests the forward movement of the *baldacchino* through the open gates from the sanctuary. This creates problems, as it implies the high altar is downstage (in the auditorium) in a less than realistic inversion of the topography of the Church. Alternatively, the procession remains upstage, in front of where the high altar should be and the people, and Scarpia, face upstage for the scene as in the watercolour. As was discovered recently by Teatro dell'Opera di Roma's new staging by Alessandro Talevi, which recreated the original set and costume designs, this is the only scene in the opera where the synchronicity between Hohenstein's designs, and the stage directions breaks down. Throughout the rest of the opera, "meticulous adherence to the stage directions supports both the drama and the delivery of the music". But if the people and Scarpia face upstage to sing, and the sound of the chorus is dispersed from the Chapter choir far upstage to the people downstage, the musical effect would be disastrous, and highly unlikely to be acceptable to the conductor or chorus master. Reviews of the first *Tosca* give no indication that the production or integration of sound was unsatisfactory in this scene (as critics were more than ready to complain if the forces or effect fell short of expectations, for example about early productions of Boito's *Mefistofele*, as seen earlier). On the contrary, whatever judgements were placed on it, it was agreed to be impressive.[282] Given Puccini's pedantic insistence on creating 'realistic' spatial acoustics of the bells throughout *Tosca*, it is reasonable to assume the balance of the sound of this finale would also have received careful attention. So, what conclusions might we reasonably draw about the original staging of the finale? The French *mise-en-scène* by Albert Carré shows that an alternative design was soon authorised by Ricordi and presumably Puccini, namely that the high altar was to be placed mid-stage right, rotating the configuration of the church interior. The implication is that the procession would come downstage to the altar and turn, so that Scarpia and the chorus could all face the Cardinal without awkwardly singing directly upstage. This solution has one disappointing side effect, which is to destroy the sense of grandeur of the interior of Sant'Andrea della Valle. With the depth of the Church foreshortened in this way, as

[282] See chapter V for the consensus between liberal and Catholic newspapers, as well as among critics who otherwise reacted negatively to the new opera.

has been frequently done in modern stagings, the scene can appear like a parish church rather than a Roman basilica.

Fig. 21 ASCR, Tosca Mise-en-scène by M. Albert Carré (Ricordi Parigi, 1911)[283]



L' EGLISE DE St ANDRE DE LA VALLEE.

A. Grande ferme avec portes non praticables au fond.

B. Grande nef

C. Ouverture praticable fermée par une portière en tapisserie

D. Grande grille à quatre vantaux praticables (a;b;c;d;)

E. Bénitier monté sur une petite colonne et surmonté d'une madone richement habillée et couronnée. Aux pieds de celle-ci sont suspendus des ex-voto. Au-dessus de la madone, une petite lampe allumée est suspendue.

F. Vasque au pied du bénitier et remplie de fleurs dont quelques-unes fanées.

G. Grand-autel sur lequel est établi un échafaudage auquel on parvient par l'échelle K, avec une main-courante L.

H. Grands gradins faisant le tour du grand-autel.

[283] The high altar is indicated in the shaded area. Although the handbook is dated 1911, as Carré directed the first French production of *Tosca* in 1903, it is possible this staging had already been developed.

With no high altar visible in the Hohenstein design, but the stage directions proving inadequate, the solution adopted by Rome Opera in 2015 offers one possible alternative. Mindful of the need for the final lines of the *Te Deum*, sung in unison, to be strongly bolstered by the lower voices, the choir comes downstage and spreads across the width of the proscenium, followed by the Cardinal's retinue, while Scarpia downstage left sings the infamous line "Tosca, you make me forget God!". Scarpia and the people then kneel as the cross is presented to them. While this sidesteps the issue of the location of the high altar, it facilitates the overwhelming sonic impact of the conclusion of the *Te Deum*, and preserves a balance between Scarpia's non-diegetic monologue and the stage music of the liturgy. It also preserves a sense of unending space as the depth of the nave continues into the auditorium, implicitly breaking the fourth wall and integrating the audience into the performance.

In conclusion, far from the anticlerical interpretation generally on this scene, I read it as more consistent with a Catholic recognition of familiar liturgy in 1900. Puccini and Hohenstein create a naturalist representation of one of the most famous churches in Rome, rather than offering 'colour du temps' or local colour as in *La Juive*. Starting from the quotidian figure of the Sacristano, to the stage directions which demand "gruppi" of churchgoers arriving for the service of thanksgiving, the Te Deum procession feels like a church scene which Catholic Romans would recognise, not least the spoken Latin blessing and response.[284] Scarpia's blasphemy could outrage their sense of Catholic identity as much as it might excite the scepticism of the agnostic or anticlerical. We know that these are the elements of the staging for which Puccini, Hohenstein and Giulio Ricordi conducted meticulous research, even if their execution takes artistic licence rather than attempting slavishly to recreate a 'real' contemporary or historically reconstructed Te Deum.

[284] In the 2015 Rome production, the proposed choreography of the final kneeling of the congregation was altered under the influence of a chorister with detailed knowledge of Vatican protocol to whom other choristers deferred in matters of religion. He insisted on using an *ostensorio* (containing the Host) instead of a plain Cross original made for the Cardinal to carry, claiming only before the real Host would the people kneel. (Information from Alessandro Talevi to the author.) This vignette sheds a further light on how participants in the staging might have related to the use of familiar liturgical rites in an operatic setting.

Fig. 22 Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, *Tosca*, Act 1 Finale (2015)

Francesco Cilea – Gloria

Francesco Cilea attempted a similar ecclesiastical climax in his 1907 opera *Gloria*, in which the *Magnificat* forms the centrepiece of Act III, set in Siena Cathedral.[285] The scene is set with an orchestral introduction in which a chant-like four-note *ostinato* (the structure also used by Puccini in the Finale of Act I of *Tosca*) plays under a melody which will become the intonation of the *Magnificat* during the Act itself. This is superseded by a joyous, lyrical, dance-like theme [Fig. 1] and a third passionate melody signifying the impending nuptials [Fig. 2].[286] The 'Magnificat' theme returns to conclude the Introduction [Fig. 5]. Lionello is given a short aria welcoming the people and celebrating Gloria's virtues [Fig. 6], before the bishop leads the people in prayer, accompanied by organ obligato [Fig. 9].[287] This is overshadowed by Folco/Bardo's imprecations against the happy couple, as he and his henchmen lurk out of sight by his father's tomb. At the centre of the act is the marriage ceremony followed by the first six lines of the Magnificat. They chant on a monotone, "Dies Irae, Dies istae", and confirm the plot in an exchange conducted on monotones, supported by strings and organ *obbligato* [Fig. 11].[288] The sandwiching of two liturgical tropes, the

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[285] *Gloria* is an adaptation of another Sardou melodrama, *La Haine* (Hatred), this time a Romeo-and-Juliet story among the Guelphs and Ghibellines of fourteenth century Siena, with a libretto by Arturo Colautti (who also provided libretti for *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Giordano's *Fedora*). Act III takes place inside Siena Cathedral as the eponymous heroine is married to her lover Lionetto in her family's chapel and her kinsman Folco, plots revenge by tricking Lionetto into a fraternal embrace in which he stabs him. This draws the warring clans out of the Cathedral to fight, while the lovers sing a final duet, following which Gloria takes the dagger and kills herself. Cilea revised *Gloria* in 1932 changing Folco's name to Bardo.

[286] Rehearsal numbers taken from Francesco Cilea, *Gloria: drama Lirico in tre atti di Arturo Colautii, riduzione per canto e pianoforte di Renato Parodi* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1932).

[287] This wedding scene as the backdrop to a mediaeval feud makes a striking contrast with the dramaturgical parameters used at the beginning of our period. For example in 1873, Carlos Gomes' highly successful opera of gypsy revenge in Venice, *Fosca*, takes took a conventional approach to an ecclesiastical scene, in which the action takes place outside the Church, including procession and nuptial hymn. The procession and congregation then pass into the Church for the wedding service, leaving Fosca outside to pray for revenge, and the ensuing battle between the cosairs and the Venetians has to begin off-stage in the Church before spilling out onstage. Carlos Gomes, *Fosca: melodramma in quattro atti di Antonio Ghislanzoni. Riduzione di N. Celega. Nuova edizione riveduta dall'autore* (Milan: Ricordi, 1889) Act II, finale, pp.155-206.

[288] The deviation in these Latin imprecations from the standard text of the liturgy, "dies irae, dies *ista*" rather than "dies *illa*", may reflect the deeper interest in mediaeval history among this generation of artists and intellectuals. It appears in the lamentation of Taddeo da Sessa after the proclamation of the deposition and excommunication of Emperor Frederick at the Council of Lyon in 1245, "Dies istae dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae". See Suzanne Lewis,

Magnificat, and the Latin lines for '*day of wrath*', most commonly used in the *Requiem* liturgy, carries an echo of *Tosca*, but Cilea perhaps fails to invest Folco's music with the passion which fires Scarpia, despite Falco being in love with Gloria. Additionally, the use of the *Dies Irae* to characterise the plotters mirrors Spoletta's use of lines from the same prayer in Act II of *Tosca*. Just as the torture of Cavaradossi reaches its climax, Spoletta murmurs, also on a monotone, "*Judux ergo cum sedebit, quid latet apparebit, nil inultum remanebit*."[289]

However we might also analyse the *Magnificat* scene in the context of the earlier discussion of Halévy's *La Juive*. Folco's *sottovoce* "Dies irae*"* is interrupted by the bishop loudly intoning the first line of the *Magnificat* as a chant in Latin, supported by the ostinato motif from the introduction, with bells and harp [Fig. 13]. Then the people enter with an archaic-sounding polyphonic version of the first six lines, reminiscent of Palestrina – a use of stylised archaism familiar from examples earlier in the century like Meyerbeer's use of Lutheran chorale tunes. This time, anachronistically for fourteenth-century Catholic liturgy, they also sing in Italian, although the people would in reality not even have participated in the actual ritual, but sung, 'paraliturgically' a *lauda* afterwards. The first two lines are sung unaccompanied, but then the strings wash over their conclusion, before falling silent again while the chorus continues, accompanied by organ. Finally, bishop and people intone again 'Magnificat anima mea Dominum' supported by the orchestra playing the ostinato theme [Fig. 15], again a solecism which would not be repeated in real liturgy. The orchestra then breaks into the lyrical wedding music again over the final cadence of the last line [Fig. 16]. The *Magnificat* theme returns again at the conclusion of the scene as Gloria commits suicide over Lionetto's body, which might suggest the lovers' redemption or apotheosis. As well as the archetypal scoring of bells, organ and harp, it is worth making a further observation, that Cilea employs what film music

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The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora (Berkeley: UCP, 1987) pp. 264-5; 'I Destini di Roma', *Civiltà Cattolica* (Serie IX, vol. II, fasc. 571) 24 March 1874, pp. 48-9.

[289] "When therefore the Judge will sit, whatever lies hidden will appear, nothing will remain unpunished." The intention of Puccini's stage direction for giving this line is far from clear "*brontolando in attitudine di preghiera*" ("*muttering, in an attitude of prayer"*). Girardi says that this is evidence of a "clerical" characterisation of the scene, though it is difficult to see why this should be so in the mouth of Spoletta, a police thug. More plausibly it is another instance of Tosca's religiosity being used against her, with Spoletta pushing her to breaking point. Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, p.186.

studies describes as ‘de-acoustimisation’. The opening ‘Magnificat’ four note ostinato cannot be recognised as diegetic, ‘heard music’, at this point, until the Magnificat rite begins, when the audience re-hears the theme in the context of the stage music. Cilea therefore uses this theme throughout the Act to give a unity otherwise absent. One might conclude, that in incorporating so many techniques to realise the scene, throwing the kitchen sink at it might be uncharitable, Cilea perhaps failed to match Puccini’s synthesis of liturgical music within the dramaturgy of his score in *Gloria*. What is certain is that his compositional choices looked back to the earlier nineteenth century as much as more recent trends in creating ‘authenticity’ or ‘realism’ in liturgical scenes. My final group of liturgical scenes comprise four examples of Easter ritual and prayer, and show how composers writing in widely differing styles arrived at strikingly similar solutions for these scenes.

Pietro Mascagni – Cavalleria Rusticana

As was discussed in Chapter I, Mascagni's elaboration of Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana* involves an off-stage *Regina Coeli* in the church, as on-stage Santuzza and the villagers sing their own vernacular Easter hymn. Using an unaccompanied organ statement of the theme to set an appropriate ecclesiastical tone, the *Regina Coeli*, despite being heard as stage music, makes no attempt to adopt modal effects or allude to real plainsong melody as with Franchetti’s *Salve Regina*. It is consistent with the onstage vernacular hymn sung by the villagers, within the style of the non-diegetic music of the score. It begins as a conventional homophonic hymn in G major, with only organ re-statements of the main theme to maintain the sense of local colour. Soon the orchestra builds the emotional effect with highly operatic motives including repeated triplets. It is therefore striking, and little commented on in discussion of the ‘verismo’ style, that Mascagni, while adopting ‘veristic’ techniques of depicting violence, bloodshed and screaming, makes little attempt to create a ‘veristic’ ecclesiastical sound-world.[290]

[290] Mascagni did adopt a different approach in his later opera *Parisina* (1913) to a libretto by D’Annunzio, based on the poem by Byron set in 15th century Ferrara. Act II of the opera is set outside the Holy Church of Loreto by the Adriatic, and weaves between a vernacular homophonic litany – the opening of ‘Ave Maria’ sung by three maidens, a plainsong imitation by monks in the church of extracted lines from a Marian prayer, and the muscular

Antonio Smareglia – Cornill Schut/ I Pittori Fiamminghi

While Mascagni was being hailed as the answer to Italy's prayers for a new maestro, Antonio Smareglia struggled to match in Italy the approbation his early operas received in Austria and Germany through their absorption of Wagnerian technique and broader Germanic style, coloured by his heritage of Istrian folk music.[291] In *Cornill Schut* (1893), revised as *I Pittori Fiamminghi* (1917), a story of seventeenth-century artists which mixes the ambiences of *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger*, Smareglia and his librettist Illica set the final Act during the night before Easter Sunday, and used the symbolism of the Passion and resurrection as keys to artistic inspiration achieved through abnegation of romantic love.[292] The Easter setting suggests the eponymous artist as a Christ-like figure, while Elisabetta, his former lover, mirrors this as both a Marian vision which inspires him, and a saint, herself longing to be released from earthly torment. The Flemish painter, having abandoned Elisabetta to pursue his artistic destiny, is toiling unsuccessfully on a canvas of a Madonna in the Carmelite convent of Antwerp, where unbeknown to him Elisabetta has conveniently retreated as a nun, having repeatedly anguished about

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declamation of a cantilena by fishermen, giving way to Parisina's own individual prayer to the Virgin. At no times does Mascagni attempt to layer these different styles but uniting them through vivid orchestral interjections. *Parisina, Tragedia lirica in quattro atti di Gabriele D'Annunzio. Musicata da Pietro Mascagni* (Milan: Casa Sonzogno, 1913); Alan Mallach, *Pietro Mascagni and his operas* (Boston: Northeastern University, 2002) p. 209.

[291] Smareglia's father was Italian from Austrian Pola in Istria, which was only annexed to Italy after the First World War. His first opera, *Il Vassallo di Szigeth* (1889), had been premiered in Vienna and received acclaim from Brahms, "finally an opera worthy of the Viennese shrine" [quoted in Budden, 'Wagnerian tendencies', p. 326]. Act I of *Il Vassallo* is set inside the Church of an abbey in which a wedding rite is transformed into a funeral hymn after the supposed death of the bride, where the music alludes to the polyphony of Bach. The first version of the opera included a mezzo soprano role, the 'Canonichessa' (later cut) leading the chorus in singing a requiem. Later, outside the villagers sing an *Ave Maria*. An internal Church scene would still have been unprecedented in Italy, but the opera was not performed in Italy until 1930 in Pola, by then Italian territory [Paolo Petronio, *Le opera di Antonio Smareglia* (Trieste: Edizione Itao Svevo, 2004) pp. 84-85, 95-96].

[292] Sadly, like *Il Vassallo*, *Cornill Schut*/*I Pittori Fiamminghi* also failed to receive a premiere in Italy until the year of the composer's death in 1928, in Trieste, by then in Italy, its only previous Italian production being in its revised version in Habsburg Trieste in 1900 [Petronio, *Smareglia*, p. 106]. Fabio Vidali has analysed the changes in the score made between the two versions. Fabio Vidali, 'L'Evoluzione del linguaggio da *Cornill* ai *Pittori*' in *Antonio Smareglia e i "Pittori fiamminghi": atti del convegno di studi su Antonio Smareglia: Trieste, 29 aprile 1991* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1996) pp. 39-59.

her fate, exemplified in a motif. “Amore o monastero” throughout the opera, which suggests a particularly passive female archetype.

During the prelude to Act III, Cornill despairs at his empty canvas and that his inspiration has abandoned him, a theme depicted in the orchestra with what we could term its ‘resurrection’, or ‘redemption through art’ motif – a heavenly melody of violin tremolo, muted brass and harp arpeggios.[293] However, Elisabetta emerges from the cloister to pray to the Virgin at the altar “Tu che il pianto nel velo di chi ti prega”, repeating her desire for death, featuring the “Amor o monastero” motif. She is eventually recognised by Cornill.[294] She initially resists his entreaties to flee with him, but they unite briefly in ecstasy as their vocal lines entwine and echo the chorus of nuns singing a sombre litany allusive of Bach, which refer to the Church’s vigil of Holy Saturday: “the widowed altar/ dark shadows veil the arches/ all around tears are shed/ sighs, moans and beating of breasts”).[295] During the first verse of the litany, the orchestral accompaniment initially imitates the sound of organ music in its harmonies, in the way of composers earlier in the nineteenth-century, before the arresting entry of an actual organ at the words “the organ weeps funereal hymns”, further blurring the distinction between the off-stage diegetic music and the lovers’ own vocal lines.[296] Cornill and Elisabetta exchange arguments almost like an antiphonal layer of the choral litany around them. Finally, Cornill admits defeat and they part, Elisabetta retreating off-stage while the nuns emerge on stage, and so begins a scene of apotheosis in which hymn-like (almost martial) singing by the nuns of Christ’s resurrection and ascension (“Cessan le lacrime! Squarciato il vel! Cristo è risorto! Asceso al cielo!”), repeating the resurrection theme from the prelude to the

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[293] Antonio Smareglia, *I Pittori Fiamminghi: dramma in tre atti di Luigi Illica. Riduzione per canto e pianoforte di Mario Smareglia* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1990). Act III, p. 171; Petronio, *Antonio Smareglia*, p. 129.

[294] Smareglia, *I Pittori Fiamminghi.* Act III. The staging again suggests an innovation in ecclesiastical scenes. The action takes place in the interior of the Church (which again during the 1890s would have been revolutionary), in fact with the altar downstage. Schut paints in a chapel to one side, while Elisabetta emerges to pray in an opposite chapel. Upstage is the expanse of the Church and the cloister beyond, an inversion of the usual on-stage geography of cloister and church.

[295] "L'altare è vedovo/ Penombre livide le arcate velano/ Intorno lacrime le cose piangono/ Sospiri, gemiti dai petti e rompono.] Smareglia, *I Pittori Fiamminghi*, pp. 211-218; Petronio, *Antonio Smareglia*, pp. 132-133.

[296] [“Canti funerei singhiozza l’organo”.] On the imitation of the sound of organ music using alternative instrumentation (“organistica”), see Beghelli, *La Retorica del Rituale*, pp. 208-215.

act, ends with Elisabetta on a ringing high C, suggesting her own transfiguration while also bestowing a miracle on Cornill.[297] Thus inspired, Cornill rapidly completes his painting in the likeness of Elisabetta, “Thus I will adore you!” (”Adorarti così!”), as a male chorus from outside hails the arrival of Spring accompanied by a brass triplet motif, in time for his fellow painters to witness his masterpiece revealed. The brush falls suddenly from his grasp and he collapses dead, as the orchestra depicts his transfiguration with a C major resolution and harp arpeggios with a final cadential statement of the resurrection motif.[298] Smareglia has manipulated both time and space in this scene of transfiguration and resurrection – compressing the night of the Easter vigil, and the action of Cornill’s painting, while musically suggesting archaic liturgical styles and employing established tropes of celestial instrumentation for motifs of transcendence and purity.[299]

Franco Alfano – Risurrezione

Franco Alfano's *Risurrezione* (1904), to a libretto by Cesare Hanau, was adapted from Tolstoy’s novel, *Resurrection*, and premiered in Turin at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele, which built a reputation for progressive new works at the turn of the century.[300] Stylistically Alfano deployed much of the familiar ‘verismo’ musical language which had evolved over the previous decades, but his musical

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[297] Smareglia, *I Pittori Fiamminghi*, p. 226. [“Cease your tears! Drawn back is the veil! Christ is risen! Ascended!”.] The veil is used repeatedly as a metaphor in this scene, for the nun’s vows, Christ’s shroud, and the cover for Cornill’s blank canvas.

[298] Fabio Vidali, ‘L’Evoluzione del linguaggio da *Cornill* ai *Pittori*’ in *Antonio Smareglia e i "Pittori fiamminghi": atti del convegno di studi su Antonio Smareglia: Trieste, 29 aprile 1991* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1996) p. 38.

[299] Petronio takes a critical stance of the libretto and dramaturgy of this scene, in which we pass from Holy Saturday through to Easter morning rapidly, while allowing for the painting of a religious masterpiece, as letting down Smareglia’s musical genius; Petronio, *Antonio Smareglia*, pp. 134-135.

[300] Franco Alfano, *Risurrezione, Dramma in quattro atti*. Parole di Cesare Hanau (Milan: Edizioni Ricordi, 1904). Hanau also collaborated with Ettore Albini on the unset libretto of *Maria Egiziaca* for Alberto Franchetti, discussed in chapter I. Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection* (trans. Louise Maude) (London: Wordsworth, 2014). Synopsis: A young house maid, Katiusha, has grown up in the household of a noble family but is seduced by its scion, Prince Dimitry, who has returned home from the army. Pregnant and abandoned, Katiusha is forced into prostitution to survive, wrongly convicted of poisoning, and sent to Siberia. Dimitry, having witnessed her downfall as one of the jurors at her trial, spends the major part of the novel on a journey of awakening to the corruption and cruelty of the Russian social structure and judicial system, and then follows her to Siberia. He eventually obtains her pardon. They make their peace and declare their love, but she chooses instead to stay with the political prisoners in Siberia including Simonson, who has asked her to marry him.

interpretation of the religious themes in the story suggests a further iteration of the approach of the *giovane scuola*.[301] Dimitry's arrival at the beginning of the novel on the night before Easter Sunday includes a minute description of the Easter morning mass, a benign scene of religious bliss and social peace, before Tolstoy's denunciation of Orthodox obscurantism and archaism begins, and which sparks the romance between Katiusha and Dimitry. Alfano uses the Easter greeting "Christ is risen" to frame the whole opera, and establish character and relationships between the principal characters, villagers and prisoners. In *Risurrezione,* the social significance of religion is largely absent, but musically it assumes a greater role. The setting for Act I remains inside the family house, with the Easter Mass heard in the church offstage. There is little sense in either Act I or when it returns in Act IV in Siberia, of the darker implication of religion we find in the novel.[302] The resurrection theme In the opera signifies consolation and redemption, and the focus of spiritual resurrection has moved from Dimitri in the novel, to the redeemed Katiusha in the opera.[303] The liturgical Easter greeting is used in close association with the 'Resurrection' theme which opens and closes the opera.

In Act I, an off-stage chorus of villagers is heard by Katiusha and the other servants, greeting the arrival of Easter as they leave Church, repeating "Cristo è risuscitato", with a Church bell ostinato and interpolated by the return of the Resurrection theme and a '*bocca chiusa*' repetition of the litany tune.[304] By giving the hymn a quasi-modal harmony, Alfano also suggests an exotic, othered quality to the orthodox liturgical music. It acts as the diegetic counterpart to the Resurrection theme and its own harmonic language.[305] The most obvious operatic influence for this off-stage

[301] It is worth pointing out that, apart from Katiusha's baby which is still-born, unusually for 'verismo' opera, all of the protagonists survive the opera.
[302] Even the women's prison scene in Act III, where the pious inmate is cruelly mocked by her fellow prisoners, and the women are marched into the chapel, has a generic grimness, rather than the specific religious context of Tolstoy's criticism. It is worth noting here that Tolstoy's novel, published in serial form in Russia in 1899 was heavily censored itself and did not appear in full form in Russia until 1936.
[303] Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, pp. 298-9; Dryden, *Franco Alfano: Transcending Turandot* (Plymouth: Scarecrow, 2010) pp. 14-23.
[304] Dryden has suggested that this is an obvious imitation of Puccini's 'Humming Chorus' from *Madama Butterfly* (Dryden, *Franco Alfano*, p. 20).
[305] The piano score has the three women intoning the first "Cristo", but modern recordings give this more logically to the chorus, given that Katiusha refers to the singing exclaiming

'otherworldly' use of the Easter greeting is the Apotheosis scene in Gounod's *Faust*, and when the theme returns at the conclusion of Act IV it is used very differently.[306] The use of the Easter liturgy is now indicative of the moral redemption of Katiusha - therefore more comparable with Gounod's use of the Easter hymn at the end of *Faust*. The closing bars of the score give the following:

> *Dimitri withdraws slowly left. Katiusha remains still as she watches him depart; then she kneels, bows her head and prays silently; the exiles arrive hand in hand in a tight-knit group and all knell, praying fervently. Bells peal in the distance.*
>
> Chorus: *Cristo è risuscitato!*
>
> *Katiusha stays kneeling at the front, head lowered.* [Resurrection theme on bells D G A]
>
> Chorus: Osanna! Osanna! Osanna! [Resurrection theme and accompanied by bells]
>
> *The exiles stand up and exchange the three Easter kisses.*[307]

Umberto Giordano – Siberia

In *Siberia* Giordano makes the unusual decision to colour his Russian orthodox liturgical effects in two contrasting styles. The short opera prelude opens with an

"”Everyone is leaving church… so many lanterns lighting the sky! And now they are singing… listen!” [“Escon tutti di chiesa… Quante lanterne solcano la notte! Ed ora cantano… Udite!*”*]

[306] Dryden states that the Easter hymn is an unforgivable plagiarism from Giordano's *Siberia*, premiered only months before (Dryden, *Franco Alfano*, p.22). This seems a harsh judgement given the Gounod model and the fact that the greeting 'Christ is risen' forms part of the scene in the novel.

[307] (See Appendix 1 Source 11)

arresting ‘a cappella’ choral introit in Russian orthodox style, before breaking into the vernacular of his own idiom. It is unclear whether the hymn is to be read as diegetic music or not. Yet during the climax of Act III the sound of his orthodox Easter ritual is rendered very differently. Like Alfano he uses the device of the arrival of Easter morning (or more accurately here the night of Holy Saturday) to introduce a liturgical Easter greeting.[308] Illica’s detailed stage directions indicate how the characters and chorus experience it, and which is more directly integrated with the action than the conclusion of *Risurrezione*. It is inserted directly following the confrontation between Stefana and her nemesis Gléby.

> Suddenly, from the surrounding villages, near and far, echoes on the wind the cheerful peeling of church bells. Heralding the night of the Resurrection, the night of Holy Saturday. It is dawn, Cossack horns sound from all directions, the beating of the infantry drums; a whisper, at first indistinct, then more and more in a crescendo almost supernatural, a strange and wild expression of joy, rising higher and higher from throughout the prison; suddenly the lamps in all the huts were lit, as if by magic; a profound exaltation of indescribable peace filled everyone's hearts, the faces of each convict where fear, viciousness, crime and hatred had left deep scars, were now covered with feelings of goodness; from each heart came exultation; their arms and spirits were raised to heaven and cried aloud.[309]

At this point the prison governor appears as a benevolent surrogate priest, gives one of the convicts an Easter kiss and intones *“Cristo è risorto”*, taken up by the crowd of convicts. Musically, the passage is a world away from how Giordano used the Russian orthodox style to open the opera, or from Alfano's exotic-sounding Russian interlude. Harmonically tonal, the homophonic chorus building up into 9 parts through three intonations of *Cristo è risorto*, almost like the prelude of

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[308] Correspondence between Giordano and Illica reveals that the librettist’s original scheme used Christmas rather than Easter for the setting, but Giordano thought Easter gave a better sense of local colour, based on his view (partly drawn from reading Tolstoy) that “La Pasqua si festeggia in Russia più del Natale”. See Matthias Nikolaidis, ‘Ricomincio a respirare l’aria di quei paesi’. Zu einem ›russischen‹ Naturalismus und seiner ästhetischen Entgrenzung in Opern von Umberto Giordano und Franco Alfano (1898–1904)‘, *Studia Musicologica* 52/1-4 (2011) p. 292.

[309] (See Appendix 1 Source 12)

Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, followed by shimmering string and brass motives and modulations further suggesting Wagnerian transcendence. The key changes from B major to D major and the entry of the bells is reminiscent of the beginning of Act 3 of *Tosca*, with the same string motif as before. The Easter peace is broken by Gléby, heralding the band to start the prison theatre performance, and it is here that exoticism takes over with a zither playing a version of a Russian folk tune which accelerates the music away from the stillness of the Easter hymn towards the abyss of the conclusion. The folk music acts much more like 'local colour' here than the exoticism of Alfano's orthodox hymn, and Giordano's eclectic use of colouristic devices as diegetic effects highlights an important conclusion of this section. These varied examples demonstrate that the use of liturgical music and settings presented composers with real challenges in terms of stylistic unity, dramaturgy and audience perception. Similar techniques including instrumentation of organ, bells and vocal style provided ready markers of a liturgical style, but in order to enhance the expressive and emotional impact of a scene, layering the religious text and music with the non-diegetic landscape of the score offered new ways to achieve this, which started to probe further the 'fantastical gap' (*pace* Stillwell) in which perception of 'real music' on stage was uncertain. Other composers, like Mascagni, clearly backed away from such an approach, preferring to pastiche a liturgical style within his own idiom.

The Religious Life and Death

These approaches to colouring the dramaturgy of a work with liturgical music took advantage of ensemble and chorus scenes. New opportunities for the characterisation of individual piety and religiosity also expanded, yet composers continued to be drawn to the use of diegetic music and sound to suggest a shift to a moment of religious reflection or transcendence. As transcendence itself became a more important operatic trope, composers again followed Wagner's example in dissolving the boundary between the diegetic and non-diegetic sound worlds. This section will examine some examples of how the musical and dramatic vocabulary of the religious life and the death of its heroines expanded through the suggestion of the supernatural using musical effects including diegetic music, and where composers isolated these moments by opting to create either set-piece numbers or sudden dramatic dénouements.

In the primo ottocento, the *preghiera* or prayer form developed a set of dramatic and musical markers with which to embody images of submissive female piety. Despite the ongoing censorship of religious expression, they responded to the growing artistic interest in Marian themes, and the as outlined in the Introduction above. According to Francesco Izzo, in Griselda's Marian prayer in *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (1843), 'Salve Maria', the text was censored to differing degrees across the peninsula, but Verdi establishes the religious tone of the angelic salutation through the spare scoring including woodwind obligato and the use of tremolo in the strings to indicate transcendence.[310] Establishing a descriptive musical vocabulary to suggest transcendence in a prayer became more common in this period.[311] Yet it could ignite controversy, as the example of *I Lombardi* shows. In Ruggero Manna's 1845 setting of the *Ave Maria* a bell motif taken from those heard in the Papal States is played as an introduction by the pianist, before the motif is translated into an

[310] Francesco Izzo, Verdi, the Virgin, and the Censor: The Politics of the Cult of Mary in *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* and *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 572.
[311] In Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1850) Elsa's "Einsam in trüben Tagen/ hab ich zu Gott gefleht." ("Lonely in troubled days/ I prayed to the Lord") is a narrative song, rather than a prayer, but it recounts her prayers, and the first half uses a similar musical atmosphere and instrumentation to Griselda's prayer.

ostinato pattern accompanying the vocal line – a chamber music instance of the integration of diegetic music into the non-diegetic score.[312] For using such descriptive language for this liturgical prayer, Manna was criticised in the pages of the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*.[313] Verdi refined his use of these devices, for example through the two prayers given to Leonora in *La forza del destino*, particularly Leonora's 'Pace, pace, mio Dio', whose harp-accompanied melody reminded Filippo Fillipi of Schubert's *Ave Maria*. In its most refined example, to use Marco Beghelli's description, Desdemona's Ave Maria in Otello, Verdi creates a dramatic contrast between a 'hyper-real' recitation of the litany in a rigorously liturgical style, with the aria's informal lyrical central section which she offers her personal prayer.[314]

Verdi's contemporaries offered only rarely variation on these modes of religiosity. One interesting example is in Ponchielli's *I promessi sposi* which, as already discussed focused on the typical traits of Catholic-Liberal opera like *mansuetudine*, which Verdi had employed most consistently in *I Lombardi* and selectively elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter I, the Nun of Monza in Ponchielli's opera suggested a rather bold depiction of a wayward immorality, and is given a dramatic scena in which she pours out her anguished dilemma and regret, further sharpened by the off-stage choir of nuns. However this mainly serves to counterpoint the purity and *mansuetudine* of the ideal female pious heroine, Lucia. Her *preghiere* conform to this Catholic-Liberal model, for example in Act III, 'O Santa Vergine', offers a plea to God that in return for release by her captor she will for ever remain chaste, an oath which is accompanied by a string tremolo, indicative of a divine presence, and is swiftly followed by the miraculous news of her freedom.[315]

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[312] This might have been a model for similar 'realistic' liturgical translations as Franchetti's Salve Regina in *Cristoforo Colombo*.
[313] Izzo, 'Verdi, the Virgin, and the Censor', p. 569.
[314] Beghelli, *La retorica del rituale*, pp. 299-302.
[315] Ponchielli, *I promessi sposi,* Part IV.iii, pp. 186-190; Cheskin, 'Catholic-Liberal Opera', pp. 93-97. A similar attitude can be found in Petrella's adaptation of the novel, when Renzo discovers Lucia and her mother in the Lazarretto, singing a prayer to the Virgin, which exhibits a typically sweet, simple rising and falling melody in homophonic style. "Hail Mary, Queen of Heaven,/ on us sufferers turn your gaze,/ mother of grace, mother of love". [Salve Maria, del ciel regina,/ su noi gementi lo sguardo inchina,/ madre di grazia, madre d'amore"]. See Ibid., pp. 150-151.

A similar, if not imitative approach to *La forza del destino* can be seen in the work of Carlos Gomes (1836-1896), the Brazilian composer who had considerable success in Italy, and was highly regarded by Verdi. In *Salvator Rosa* (1874), a romantic treatment of the seventeenth century artist's role in rebellion against the Spanish in Naples, Act III.ii takes place in the courtyard of a Carmelite monastery, again showing discretion in avoiding an interior church scene long after the change in censorship regime. A mournful organ prelude with repeated rising and falling melody and tolling bell sets the scene in which the heroine Isabella, torn between obedience to her father the Duke and her love for the eponymous rebel, is given a warning by witnessing the choir of nuns mourning a dying sister, traduced in love, who sought sanctuary and oblivion in the cloister. The nuns intone in canon their task in going to church to seek solace in God's forgiveness of sins, accompanied by the organ theme, but this gives way to something more unusual. Ending on a *tierce de picardie*, they see Isabella, and break out into a mischievous gossiping about the scandal which has befallen her, to staccato string accompaniment. Finally, they return to their pious thoughts, "earthly joys are fleeting, and only in the cloister will the heart find peace" ("son le gioie del mondo una chimera, e sol nel chiostro trova pace il core"). Their message is amplified by violins insistently echoing the note and rhythm of their chanting.[316]

But the monastery in operas like *La forza del destino* or *Salvator Rosa*, as with the distant convent atmosphere conveyed in earlier operas like *Il Trovatore*, is far removed from the more realistic depiction of the nuns' world within the works of the *giovane scuola*, notably Giordano's *Mese Mariano* (1910) and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* (1918), in which the musico-dramatic purpose of religious piety, female devotion and sacrifice are given a new focus and detail. As Laura Basini has pointed out, trends of historicism and sacred revivalism began to fuel an interest in antique liturgical styles and forms from the period of Verdi's *Messa di Requiem* onwards.[317] Far from being seen as reactionary, their integration into operatic styles, as with

[316] Carlos Gomes, *Salvator Rosa: dramma lirico in quattro atti di Antonio Ghislanzoni, riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, 1874) Act III.ii, pp. 335-344. It is striking that this fleeting view of the nuns stepping outside the deportment of their liturgical musical vocabulary is represented by a negative stereotype of female behaviour, malicious gossip.
[317] Laura Basini, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism in post-Unification Italy', *19th Century Music*, vol. 28 no. 2 (Autumn 2004) pp. 133-59.

some of the liturgical effects discussed above, was one response to a broader modern interest in the spiritual and mystical and abstract forms of expression.[318]

We see this taken to an extreme conclusion in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. The opera was undeniably original in the obvious sense of using only female voices on stage.[319] Reaction to the convent setting, including its "monotonous quality" and "an excess of detail" suggest some confusion about how a closed-order of nuns might be realised dramatically and musically.[320] Familiar tropes of ecclesiastical settings and speech, liturgical singing, off-stage choirs, bells and birds, modal harmonies, and chant-like melismatic conversation accompanied by organ, permeate the opera. Many of these devices are found in earlier operas, from Donizetti's *La Favorita* to Verdi's *La forza del destino*, but the *giovane scuola*'s 'veristic' deployment of such musical effects, arguably goes beyond their use as 'local colour', in fact we might say that with *Suor Angelica* the liturgical becomes the vernacular. A key marker of their religious settings is a more thorough use of the meter and melodies of Gregorian chant to style both parlando recitative and lyrical passages and prayers, so that the suggestion of diegetic music, or Beghelli's 'cantar cantando', is constantly being evoked through a musical signal, and allowing the composer to craft a more continuous score than having religious 'numbers' like a 'preghiera' stand alone.

Suor Angelica expands the vocabulary of the cloister through the normalisation of the religious perspective, both as a social setting and as an internal psychological landscape, even where Angelica has her own aria '*Senza Mamma*'. This lyrical set-piece (a *lamento-preghiera* in Girardi's formulation) still references established religious tropes – we hear a harp, string arpeggios and harmonies suggesting the aeolian mode, for example – but it gives a nun the traditional musical voice of an

[318] Axel Körner, 'Music of the Future: Italian Theatres and the European Experience of Modernity between Unification and World War I', European *History Quarterly*, vol. 41 no. 2 (2011) pp. 189-212.
[319] Puccini does introduce lower voices among the celestial choir in the final bars of the miracle scene, the significance of which will be discussed below. Forzano and Puccini's models for *Suor Angelica* included the male cloistered world of Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* and Maeterlink's play *Sœur Béatrice*.
[320] Alberto Gasco, 'Le nuove opere di Puccini al Costanzi', *La Tribuna*, 13 January 1919, quoted in Wilson *The Puccini Problem*, p. 180.

operatic mother in distress – a rocking lullaby with distressed soaring climaxes.[321] Furthermore, this normalisation of the religious life is partly a function of the 'othering' of the secular world and the demonisation of the morality of its representative in the Zia Principessa. Helen Greenwald has suggested that the confrontation between the Zia Principessa and Angelica is a clearly drawn parallel with the Philip-Inquisitor scene in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.[322] As she points out the Church is depicted in a far less negative way than in *Don Carlos*. However, we might go further and say that it inverts the dichotomy, to create a secular figure who misuses religion to assert personal power, against the moral goodness of the religious figure of Angelica, in a similar way to Scarpia in *Tosca*.

Giordiano's *Mese Mariano*, which was premiered to a generally cool reception in Italy in 1910, had already presented a female-dominated space in the contemporary setting of a convent-run institution for foundlings. Considering how these two cloistered female worlds use diegetic music, both adopt a similar Gregorian-chant *parlando* idiom for most of the dialogue. In Giordano's convent school, the musical vernacular is suffused with plainsong figures and rhythms, church bells, harps and organ, rather than used in isolation as a colouristic effect. Puccini achieves something similar but with more intensity. His nuns' speech and song is voiced with actual liturgical ornamental rhythms *for "*Miserere*" and "*Agnus Dei*" and* is contrasted with states of emotional stress in which melodic lines are more recognisably 'verismo', as Giordano does in a more limited way in Carmela's aria.

In secular settings, in the face of sexual predation, 'verismo' heroines appeal to God or the Virgin Mary on numerous occasions. A few examples serve to illustrate a spectrum of the extent to which these employ the operatic markers of religion discussed, and how startling are the exceptions which seek to move beyond them. In *Tosca*, music is at the service of the drama (in Girardi's formulation), with cross-references between leitmotivic themes establishing connections between dramatic scenes and psychological states. In 'Vissi d'arte', the diva's Act II *lamento-preghie*ra

[321] Michele Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp. 406-410.
[322] Helen M. Greenwald, 'Verdi's Patriarch and Puccini's Matriarch: "Through the Looking-Glass and What Puccini Found There"', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring, 1994), pp. 220-236.

as Scarpia waits for her answer to his vile proposal, the religious character of Tosca is at its most explicit. Not only does she ostensibly direct her appeal to God and refer to her good works and the sacred purpose of her art, she performs it, arguably as stage music, '*cantar cantando*', possibly for the benefit of Scarpia, as one last futile attempt to soften his heart. This is suggested by the stage directions, which say that "*coldly Scarpia leans on a corner of the table. He pours himself coffee and drinks it, his eyes fastened on Tosca*".[323] Whether this was an appropriate musical vehicle for this crucial moment in the drama absorbed much of the negative critical attention 'Vissi d'arte' received at its premiere, for example Luigi Torchi dismissed it as a 'curious dramatic improbability, suggesting he could not accept the idea of the prayer being heard by other characters on stage'.[324] Musically, Puccini imbues the prayer with several tropes of religious music; as Girardi explains, its opening is psalm-like, accompanied by triads which recall a liturgical faux bourdon.[325] The scoring of this main section includes some of the traditional instrumentation of nineteenth century prayers and angelic music – harp arpeggios and soaring flute. Most importantly, it directly recalls the music with which Tosca enters the Church in Act I.[326] This suggests that Tosca is adopting the frame of mind with which she approaches her faith, whether consciously for Scarpia's benefit or not. Therefore, both the diegetic potential of the prayer and its non-diegetic religious markers are interwoven.

To return to *Mese Mariano*, it again provides a brief foreshadowing of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* during the Intermezzo when Carmela is being shown the Church as she waits for the nuns to produce her son. Its musical effect implies a heavenly intervention which suddenly shifts the sound-world into an exotic mode, and suggests an implicit diegetic effect of the supernatural. The opening scene directions make clear the Neapolitan setting and the benevolent surveillance of the patron, San Gennaro. *"On the balustrade is a statue of San Gennaro, patron saint of Naples. The saint extends his right hand towards Vesuvius, as if to calm his fury."* The revelation of Nino's death by the nuns is preceded by a short orchestral interlude as Carmela is

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[323] "*freddamente Scarpia va ad appoggiarsi ad un angolo della tavola, si versa il caffè e lo assorbe mentre continua a guardare Tosca*", bar 797.
[324] Luigi Torchi, 'Tosca', *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, 7 (1900) p.88, quoted in Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, pp. 79-80.
[325] Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, p.187.
[326] Ibid., p.187.

show the Church. The music changes abruptly to a quasi-modal, exotic style using a triplet motif F'-G-F-E, with the stage direction: "*It is dusk. A rosy light fills the horizon. Everything in front of the statue of San Gennaro is bathed in the light."*

The implication is clearly that something mysterious has occurred. Either it is the nuns discovering the death, or the child's transfiguration under the protecting gaze of San Gennaro. Although a brief moment in an otherwise faithfully 'verismo' vignette, it does foreshadow the ambiguous, liminal state between the real and the supernatural which Puccini exploits to the extreme in *Suor Angelica*.

Similar intimations of the transcendent are evident in the 'miracle scene' which concludes Suor Angelica.[327] Musicologists and critics have long debated how to read this apparent supernatural intervention in what is otherwise considered a realist depiction of a cloistered world which has often been dismissed as kitsch or wilfully nostalgic. Michele Girardi and James Hepokoski have posited a hermeneutic reading of Puccini's cyclical reuse of material earlier in the opera, including the nuns' litany-prayer and Angelica's own 'Senza Mamma', as evidence of a pessimistic reading of Angelica's hallucination and bleak, tortured death.[328] Andrew Davis has added to this interpretation by highlighting unexpected harmonic turns in which the music undercuts the impression of the marvellous.[329] Arman Schwartz, while recognising that the ethereal use of similar operatic markers to the 'veristic' sound-world of the cloister has always sat awkwardly with critics, suggests an alternative interpretation in which the repetition of earlier vocal motives in 'disembodied' instrumental forms in the miracle scene could have created a resonance (both figuratively and literally) for early audiences of their understanding of wireless technology and the magical connotations of its immateriality. [330] Certainly, the otherwise conventional religious

[327] Mascagni's *Iris* offers an alternative suicide scene in which, although not specifically Catholic, employs similar markers of its exotic religion including the 'Inno del Sole' choral hymn, a homophonic accompaniment to Iris's transfiguration. As will be discussed in chapter V, the moral atmosphere of *Iris* and the heroine's suicide was discussed in relation to the performance of religious oratorios using the same singers on consecutive evenings.
[328] Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp. 408-410; James Hepokoski, 'Structure, Implication and the end of Suor Angelica', *Studi Pucciniani*, 3 (2004) pp. 241-64.
[329] Andrew Davis, ' Interpreting Puccini's Suor Angelica: An application of the semiotics of temporality', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology*, vol. 14 (2014) pp. 58-9.
[330] Arman Schwartz, 'Puccini in the Distance', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 167–89.

tropes we hear – organ, harp, shimmering bells, celestial choir – had an appeal to the conventionally Catholic, but as Schwartz suggests, also to positivists and rationalists (as I discuss in chapter III) whose spirit of empirical enquiry extended to questions of the metaphysical and the afterlife. The introduction of male voices into the celestial choir underlines that they must either be real heavenly voices, or a projection of Angelica's fervoured mind.[331] Puccini's fixation on creating a vision of obscurity, as mentioned above in his request for stage haze, further complicates an unambiguous reading of the scene.

Tosca's suicide has often been discussed in the context of the text of *Vissi d'arte*, and her seeming despair that God has abandoned her. '*O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!'* is seen as a rather pathetic riposte to Scarpia's double-cross rather than a more honest and self-aware affirmation of her faith and agency, after all the lies and deceit in which she has been implicated. Additionally, the interruption of the final chords of the opera by the melody of 'E lucevan le stelle*'* after her death*,* is said to privilege the secular worldview of Cavaradossi over the naïve religiosity of Tosca.[332] We might ask why Tosca isn't given a set-piece suicide aria over the body of Cavaradossi, as Ponchielli's Giaconda is given with 'Suicidio!' or the extended scena for Iris by Mascagni. Perhaps it is Tosca's very piety that requires a more immediate and vertiginous musical climax to the drama. As we shall see in chapter V, despite the anticlerical aura which has since attached itself this ending, its reception in 1900 did not read the scene in these terms.

Two final examples are of operatic heroines which defy the period's predilection for female suffering and death. In *Risurrezione*, Franco Alfano created a set-piece aria, 'Dio Pietoso', for his heroine Katiusha which, it has been suggested, was his "answer" to 'Vissi d'arte', yet actually suggests a far more progressive musical vision.[333] The opening and closing acts use, as we have seen, a powerful liturgical setting and musical theme to project the opera's redemptive, transcendent message.

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[331] It might be thought strange for Angelica to imagine male voices in the celestial choir after her life in the convent. Interestingly, this is an inversion of the finale of Act III of Wagner's *Parsifal*, where female voices are introduced into the unseen choir in a hitherto all-male choral sound-world within the world of the Grail Hall.
[332] John Louis DiGaetani, *Puccini The Thinker* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) p .71.
[333] Dryden, *Transcending Turandot*, p. 20.

‘Dio pietoso’ comes at the conclusion of Act II as Katiusha waits at the snowy train station in hope of seeing Dimitri, who has left her pregnant causing her moral downfall. A powerful cry of despair, which reuses the theme of rising and falling sixths and sevenths, it nonetheless carries none of the overt tropes of religious music we see in ‘Vissi d’arte’ or elsewhere, save perhaps a faint, momentary echo of a plainsong chant on the phrase “All powerful Lord I humbly turn to Thee”.[334] The general mood is bleak, and the extreme harmonic language with no seeming connection to the purifying or consoling tropes of religion found elsewhere in the opera show Katiusha on the edge of madness – she damns Dimitri and the woman he leaves with (“Maledetti entrambi!”), and narrowly pulls back from suicide on the edge of the station platform. Alfano is pushing the musical language of prayer in a distinctly modernist direction, establishing a contrast with the more convention resolution of Act IV and the return of the resurrection theme, when Katiusha survives her exile, but also departs without Dimitri, in a mildly unconventional ending (though faithful to its source).

This has echoes with Minnie in Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West* where there are two episodes when her piety and her influence assert themselves over the mores of the largely male community, which seems always on the verge of regressing to a primitive, pre-Christian savagery. We should note that Minnie is never given a ‘preghiera’ scene – as a mildly transgressive model of heroine she requires a different vehicle and music to assert the religious aspect of her character. The first is in Act I when the saloon becomes a bible class, with Minnie’s reading from Psalm 51, being as much about teaching literacy as morality. It is given without resort to any kind of liturgical pattern of chant or intoning, but speaks directly and passionately in the 'vernacular' melodic style of the rest of the score. This may have been a deliberate attempt by Puccini to colour the passage as Protestant, and hence part of the American colour of the score.

[334] “Signore onnipossente umil mi volgo a te!”.

> This means, my boys, there isn't in all the world, a sinner who cannot be redeemed […] Each of you should keep this supreme truth of love in your heart.[335]

Importantly these are not words taken from the psalm reading but Minnie's own interpretation of its meaning. In mediating the word of Scripture she is performing the role of priest. Rather than being invested with the trappings of liturgical stage music, the Bible reading uses the ‘redemption theme’ which Puccini establishes at the beginning of the opera’s prelude. When Minnie uses these same words to persuade the men to give her Johnson the lesson is finally learned. This time, the music echoes the themes of the waltz and love duet from Act I, possibly focusing the attention of drama on the power of love, rather than the need for redemption, and without resorting to expected tropes like bells, harps or high strings. Judgements on Puccini’s dramatic and musical response to this use of religion range from the cynical to the pragmatic. Girardi describes the ‘academy scene’ as being "open to criticism for its extreme sentimentality", though clearly a different type of religious sentimentality than ‘Vissi d’arte’.[336] He suggests that "God and redemption are merely a useful pretext to state a more worldly reality."[337] Carner will only allow that it presents a "charming idyll", and dismisses the dénouement using the traditional picture of Puccini's as anti-religious, concluding that “Minnie's subsequent sermon finds no responsive echo in Puccini's music and could not find it if we recall what has been said on his psychological make-up".[338] The scene has even been described by one Italian critic as "puerile", while admitting it should not be suppressed.[339] Clearly, many (often male) critics find Puccini’s depiction of a different type of religious heroine, with agency and authority over a male environment, in a non-Catholic ‘exotic’ setting, challenging, without the obvious markers of religious sentiment,

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[335] “Ciò vuol dire, ragazzi, che non v'è, al mondo, peccatore cui non s'apra una via dl redenzione... Sappia ognuno di voi chiudere in se questa suprema verità d'amore.”
[336] Michele Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, p. 299.
[337] “Dio e la redenzione sono dunque un utile pretesto per affermare una realtà più terrena”, Ibid., p. 324. See also Randall and David, *Puccini and the Girl*, pp. 148-156, who concur that the significance of the academy scene was to provide a dramatic justification for the miners to release Minnie and Johnson at the end of the opera.
[338] Mosco Carner, *Puccini*, pp. 464, 466.
[339] Eugenio Gara, 'Liricismo Western nel grido Redentore di Minnie' [House programme] Milan: La Scala 1963-1964 pp. 79-88. Quoted in Fairtile, Linda, *Puccini: A Guide to Research* (New York, 1999) p. 168

effect or staging. “Truth and sincerity” were self-confessedly what Puccini admired in the American story, and Minnie he admired as “naïve and refreshing”. While the iconography of their submission to her at the end is strongly Marian, as Senici emphasises, the social and gender implications are radically different – Minnie has asserted her agency rather than submitting to patriarchal dominance.[340] To achieve this effect, Puccini clothed the religious, redemptive message in a different musical language to the usual pious diegetic quotations. These examples demonstrate that compositional choices were heavily coloured by existing patterns of musical vocabulary to connote female piety and religious torment, freighted with contemporary expectations to reflect conventional religious models. For Puccini, writing initially for a non-Italian audience might have freed him to pursue more innovative strategies.

Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari – *I gioielli della Madonna*

A final example brings together several strands of these two sub-chapters regarding liturgical scenes and the depiction of Marian piety. Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari’s *I gioielli della Madonna* again demonstrates the challenges which Italian composers faced convincing audiences both in Italy and abroad of their synthesis native and foreign styles. Not unlike Smareglia, Wolf-Ferrari’s mixed heritage, half-Venetian and half-German, as well as his musical training in Germany, feels significant in his openness to a range of influences. German and Austrian audiences certainly warmed to his approach more than Italian ones. Although his neo-classical Goldonian comedies attained more than a foothold in the repertoire of the peninsula *I gioielli*, after its premiere in Berlin in 1911, failed to be taken up in Italy, beyond a single production at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa in 1913, for another forty years. Musicological judgements on the work are harsh. Typical is Sansone’s, that operatic verismo’s “progressive degeneration into excess, sensationalism and picturesqueness… reached its lowest level with a distasteful melodrama, Wolf-Ferrari's *I gioielli della Madonna*… the quintessence of kitsch in the musical theatre”.[341] While the Neapolitan plebeian setting replete with Marian procession, and the combination of

[340] Emanuele Senici, *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: The Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005) pp. 240-246.
[341] Sansone, ‘The Critics’ response to *Cavalleria*’, p. 202.

knife action and religious superstition were hardly innovative by this point, *I gioielli* is more than an excessive regurgitation of verismo tropes. The typical love triangle is complicated by the foster-sibling relationship between Maliella and Gennaro, who steals the jewels for his foster-sister before seducing her, while the cammorista Raffaele venerates Maliella only for her virginity as a symbol of the Madonna.[342] The atmosphere often suggests the influence of Expressionism, rather than the naturalism of the late nineteenth-century.[343] The use of Marian references in relation to each of the three principal characters points to Wolf-Ferrari's interest in Jungian philosophy, more than typical Catholic symbology.[344] Thus, the Madonna becomes the Jungian matriarchal architype, "symbol of purity and sublimated sexuality".[345] The jewels themselves are a rather obvious metaphor for Maliella's virginity.[346] Unusually however, the only *preghiere* in the opera are uttered by the tenor Gennaro, twice in sung prayers to the Madonna, and once narrated by him to Maliella as he asked the Madonna for forgiveness before stealing the jewels in the Church.

As the conductor of the first commercial recording of the opera, Friedrich Haider, argues, Wolf-Ferrari's musical style in *I gioielli* goes beyond the giovane scuola's standard vocabulary to include modernist touches including tone clusters and pre-echoes of the harmonies of Shostakovich in Act III, as well as myriad folk music allusions, often using folk-style instrumentation, which seem the source of much of

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[342] The suggestion of incest and its association with desecrating religious symbols and rites provoked objections from the Catholic Church even after its post-war revival, though it is unclear how significant such pressure was in preventing its production earlier. Although the time-period for the opera's original production is described in the score as "present-day Naples", the libretto for the post-war revival of the work in 1953 moves the setting back to the year 1600 under the Spanish domination of Naples, a distancing which might be ascribed to the stereotypical setting or the depiction of extreme superstition in a contemporary Catholic community. Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, *I gioielli della Madonna: Opera in tre atti (tratta da episodi della vita napoletana) Versi di Carlo Zangarini ed Enrico Golisciani* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1953) p. 3.

[343] Annamaria Cecconi, 'Knives and Tears: Representations of masculinity in late nineteenth-century Italian opera' in Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (eds.), *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* (London: Routledge, 2017) p. 254.

[344] Wolf-Ferrari joined the circle of Jungian followers around dilettante Jungian analyst and artistic patron Edith Rockefeller McCormick in First-World-War Zurich. Paul J. Stern, *C.J. Jung: The Haunted Prophet* (New York: George Braziller, 1976) p. 150.

[345] Richard Eugene Lenar, 'The Figure of Mary in Italian Opera: Theological Foundations and Technical Analysis', (University of Dayton, unpublished thesis, 2018) pp. 55-56.

[346] Tosca famously gave jewels for the Madonna's mantle in 'Vissi d'arte' ["Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto"].

the negative judgement on the work's originality.[347] However, the main recurring motif on which Wolf-Ferrari builds his Marian references is a six-note falling and rising melody which suggests plainsong [C, A, G, C, D, E]. This motif permeates the score and is used both as stage music, as non-diegetic depiction of psychological mood, and potentially the diegetic memory of the characters. Haider posits that the motif is a modified quotation of the seventeenth century German chorale tune by Johannes Crüger, 'Nun danket all und bringet Ehr', though describing it as quotation seems misplaced. If the borrowing was intentional, its significance seems to lie more in its allusion to a simple plainsong falling and rising pattern, rather than a specific reference to this chorale (à la Meyerbeer) which would hardly have resonance in the opera's setting.[348] Act I is continuous preparation for the Marian festivities, punctuated by two duets, the first between Gennaro and his mother Carmela, and the second Raffaele's attempt to seduce Maliella and put in her mind the idea of stealing the jewels to place around her neck. The Marian melody first appears in the children's chorus, used to mock the sellers of religious icons as the opera begins (shades of Puccini's choirboys in Act I of *Tosca*), and echoed in the orchestra.[349] The first three notes of the theme [C, A, G] form a motif for the dominant sound of the bells which peal periodically from the second bar of the whole work.[350] Monks intone a prayer to San Francesco, which precedes the first vernacular Marian hymn, 'O Vergine bella di stella vestita', a calm and comforting prayer which contrasts with the cacophony of the preparations for the procession and the rich, chromatic harmonies elsewhere.[351] After the first duet, the bell motif is sounded by a Carillion to act as a cue for Gennaro's preghiera to the Madonna.[352] The end of his aria "salvami tu!" is followed by a statement of the main Marian theme by the trumpet and a return of the

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[347] Friedrich Haider, 'In the Name of the Madonna', Naxos, *I Gioielli della Madonna* (Recording CD Booklet, 2015).
[348] Ibid.
[349] *I gioielli della Madonna: Opera in three acts on Neapolitan life. Plot and Music by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari. Verse by C. Zangarini and E. Golisciani. English version by Claude Aveling. Piano-vocal score.* (New York: Schirmer, 1912) pp. 7-8.
[350] Ibid., p. 4.
[351] Ibid., pp. 34-35; Lenar, 'The Figure of Mary in Italian Opera', p. 57.
[352] *I gioielli della Madonna*., p. 47.

Bell motif.[353] In Act II, the bell motif also becomes a darker indication of Gennaro's tortured state of mind as he prepares to steal the jewels [Eb, D, C… Fb, E, D#].[354]

The arrival of the religious procession during Act I is heralded by the continuous ringing of the bells and the divided groups of chorus approaching from the distance, singing to the Marian motif "Beatam me dicent", the first half of the line from the Magnificat "Beatam me dicent omnes generationes", which forms the climax of the procession. Like the children earlier, the chorus then repeat this melody to encourage the crowd to make way "Largo! Scostatevi!".[355] While the chorus breaks into a more lyrical section for another Marian hymn, 'O Maris Stella Gloria!', the main motif reoccurs in the orchestra.[356] The procession moves on during Raffele and Maliella's flirtation scene in which she stabs him in the hand. The climax, however, is delivered as the procession returns. With the children singing "Vergine bella! Mater purissima ora pro nobis" using the main Marian motif, Raffaele asks Maliella, "Now veiled in white mantle of incense descends the Madonna to earth. Are you not the Madonna I worship, enthroned as the Queen in love's high domain? Maliella, my Queen!", before he utters the fateful enquiry "the jewels of the Madonna, shall I place them around your neck?"[357] The procession reaches its climax with the people kneeling before the Madonna to sing "Beatam me dicent omnes generationes" in unision to the main Marian theme, with the Bell motif hammered out in the orchestral bass line as the curtain falls.[358]

During Act II, apart from the intimation of the Bell theme suggesting Gennaro's tortured mind, Maliella's transgressive relationship to the Madonna whom she is taken by both men to represent through her purity, is shockingly evident in the unconventional vision she has under the influence of the incense-scented jewels. She enters a trance and sees a vision of the Madonna surrounded by angels, but it is really a vision of herself, freed from her convent-like domestic prison, and crowned

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[353] Ibid., p. 49.
[354] Ibid., pp. 183-184. Lenar, 'The Figure of Mary in Italian Opera', p. 59.
[355] *I gioielli della Madonna,* p. 128.
[356] Ibid., p. 134.
[357] Ibid., pp. 139-140. "In nuvola bianca d'incenso discende la Vergine giù. Tu sei la Madonna ch'io penso, dei cieli d'amor Regina sei tu!... I gioielli della Madonna! Vuoi che te li metta al collo?"
[358] Ibid., pp. 153-156.

by Raffaele as promised as Queen of his Mafia gang ("Arrayed in white passes the Madonna, crowned as Queen. The crowd bow down before her! And the angels in heaven sang her praise!"). An orchestral palate including brass fanfare motif of triplets, reminiscent of early Wagner, followed by increasingly lush harmonies, accompanies this vision. In this eroticised state she enacts her submission to him in the arms of Gennaro, crying Raffaele's name.[359]

The Marian themes return during the climax to the final Act when Maliella flings the jewels at Gennaro and is rejected by Raffaele for having worn them. Maliella flees crying "Al mare! Al mare!"[360] The Cammoristi murmur the litany with increasingly frenzied rapidity as protection against the sacrilege and a storm mysteriously breaks over their lair.[361] As Raffaele condemns Maliella, the Marian theme returns with the trumpet flattening the final note to inject a sense of disquiet.[362] As the wailing of the chorus grows louder, the bass emits a further distortion of the theme (C, A ♭, G, C, D, E ♭).[363] A pealing of the bell theme sounds the alarm that the theft has been discovered as the Cammoristi flee, loudly professing their devotion to the Madonna.[364] Gennaro pathetically gathers up the jewels and lays them at the feet of the little shrine to the Madonna and sings his final prayer to her "Madonna dei dolor! Miserere di me!". A D major chord in the harp accompanies a ray of sunlight falling on the jewels, indicating to Gennaro that the Madonna has heard him, and the main motif then returns in orchestra, first by glockenspiel and trumpet.[365] The theme is then passed through the orchestra like a pealing of bells as Gennaro's bids farewell to his mother: "The Blessed Madonna looks on me and pardons me and calls me to Heaven!", until its final utterance in three organ chords and a minor key statement on the pianoforte as Gennaro stabs himself in the heart.[366] His transcendence is communicated through a host of familiar markers, the stage direction indicates the

[359] Ibid., pp. 217-219. "E passa la Madonna in bianca veste, incoronata come una regina. La folla reverente le s'inchina! E gli angeli del ciel cantano a festa! Esser tua Raffaele!"
[360] Ibid., p. 304. This is generally taken as meaning she drowns herself, although there is no reference in the synopsis or the stage directions to her suicide.
[361] Ibid., p. 302.
[362] Ibid., p. 306.
[363] Ibid., p. 308.
[364] Ibid., p. 309-310.
[365] Ibid., p. 312.
[366] Ibid., p. 314-315. "La Vergin pia mi guarda e mi perdona; mi chiama a se nel cielo!"

dawn chorus of birds, and the instrumentation features flutes, tremolo strings and harp. Far from being a work of kitsch or the clichés of outdated verismo, *I gioielli* can be viewed as a far more progressive work in which the typical religious identities are reversed and transgressed, evidence which might help explain its rejection by conventional and particularly Italian critical opinion. Though revered as the sexual incarnation of the Virgin Mary, Maliella sings only of freedom and erotic satisfaction, whereas all around her the Madonna-fixations swirl, but are voiced particularly through the tenor whose prayers to the Mother of Heaven give him a unique characterisation among verismo heroes. Yet the musical markers for these religious images are familiar, imitations of plainsong and murmuring of litanies, instrumentation and dramatic effects.

Evidence of contemporary Italian attitudes to *I gioielli* is thin, however the lengthy coverage in the Genoese daily newspaper *Il Lavoro* suggests a more subtle and appreciative reception at its premiere than the standard musicological judgement quoted above. While pointing to momentary weaknesses of vulgarity in Act I when the Camorristi tease Maliella, and Maliella's submission to Genaro at the end of Act II, the reviewer (signed a.r.) lavished praise on the Act I finale and the concluding scene of the opera with Genaro's prayer to the Madonna and suicide, "intensely dramatic and richly embued with the composer's heartfelt imagination", ("intensamente drammatico e profondamente penetrato della commossa fantasia dell'autore"). Wolf-Ferrari's combination of local colour and drama found approval and the score recognised as "a serious affirmation of a new talent, Italian by birth and ideals" ("l'affermazione solenne di un nuovo ingegno, italiano di nascita e d'ideali").[367]

[367] *Il Lavoro*, '*I gioielli della Madonna*', 7 February 1913 (see also a preview analysis of the libretto and score, 6 Febriary 1913).

The celestial, diabolical and divine

Staging transcendence in these depictions of apotheosis and death inferred metaphysical states, which either exploited or sometimes eschewed many of the conventional markers of liturgical music. The final section of this chapter will address attempts to depict the celestial, diabolical and divine, suggesting why certain religious concepts still failed to find convincing or acceptable operatic devices. I will illustrate these tensions with some examples which are rarely cited, but which will also relate to the contexts of our three urban case studies in terms of censorship, reception and the intellectual atmosphere of Liberal Italy.

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Boito's *Mefistofele*, even in its moderated second version, challenged contemporary listeners in its structural novelty and harmonic daring. In both his poetry, libretti and operas, Boito was fascinated with the duality between good and evil, which animated positivist theory and philosophy across science and the arts. Alongside the enduring popularity of *Mefistofele* and the French *Faust* adaptations, Meyerbeer's *Roberto Il Diavolo* had also helped establish an operatic vocabulary for the depiction of the diabolical. A common effect which he used (as later did Gounod in *Faust* and Verdi in *Otello*) was a triple-time 'skipping' motive, which Parakilas has termed "the topos of the 'sicilienne of diabolical temptation'".[368] Meyerbeer developed musical motifs and themes for his characters, including Bertram's own ballad theme and the four strokes of hell which repeats through the opera.[369] Franz Liszt, in his *Faust Symphony*, realises Goethe's idea of Mefistofeles as the spirit of negation by constructing his musical motifs in the third movement out of parodies of Faust's own music in the first movement.[370] Boito had a similar understanding of Goethe and may well have been influenced by Liszt. His own note at the beginning of the score alludes to the Greek etymology of Mefistofele being 'enemy of light'. The Prologue in Heaven itself gives Mefistofele greater scope to establish his ambivalent character and relation to Man. His relationship to Faust is established through mimicry of Faust's own speech, and contrasted with the actual

[368] James Parakilas, 'Religion and Difference in Verdi's *Otello*', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), pp.377-378.
[369] Robert Letellier, *Robert Le Diable: the premier opera Romantique* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012) pp.46-54.
[370] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice 1800-1900* (Berkeley: UCP, 1990) p. 103.

whistle which will eventually accompany his downfall at the end of the opera. Julian Budden claims that *Mefistofele* had "no musical ancestors or progeny".[371] This is clearly erroneous considering these earlier musical markers of the diabolical. Furthermore, Boito's own musico-dramatic treatment of the supernatural and celestial did provide a model for later works as I will discuss below.

Alessandra Campana has demonstrated through her analysis of the *disposizione scenica*, or staging manual, for *Mefistofele*, that it used highly innovative staging techniques in terms of the spatialisation of sound on stage, combined with lighting and set design to create a "magic box" effect from which sound "emanates".[372] Such innovations might not always have been successfully realised by Italian theatres. Filippo Filippi's conclusion on his visit to the Genoa performances of *Mefistofele* that Verdi attended, was that despite it being one of the most beautiful, sincere performances of Boito's opera, "the conclusion of the Prologue didn't have the monumental and soft sound, because of the thin number of the chorus, who were overwhelmed and covered by the orchestra". This might have been compounded by the absence of an effective backcloth to push forward the sound of the hidden choirs, as prescribed in the staging manual.[373]

Boito's approach to the spatial acoustics described above clearly influenced Puccini in *Tosca* and *Suor Angelica* in particular, but it also established operatic tropes for the staging of the supernatural and the divine which can be found in later works by other Italian composers. One example is Franchetti's depiction of heaven and hell in *Asrael*.[374] The dramaturgical and imaginative challenges of representing the celestial on stage remained, as well as the question of how to represent them musically. *Asrael*'s Act I Heaven scene had such an impact when it premiered in Venice in 1891 that some *loggionisti* found it ridiculous, while critics marvelled at the musical

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[371] Julian Budden, The Operas of Verdi vol.3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) p.281.
[372] Campana, *Opera and Spectatorship in late nineteenth century Italy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015) p.25.
[373] "… la conclusione del Prologo non ha tutto il suo effetto di colossale e morbida sonorità, per la scarsità numerica del coro, sopraffatto, coperto troppo dagli strumenti." *La Perseveranza*, 19 March 1879, quoted in Alberti, *Verdi intimo*, pp. 230-231.
[374] In fact, Franchetti and his librettist Ferdinando Fontana were criticised for his over-reliance on Mefistofele as a model, see chapter III. Emanuele D'Angelo, 'Alla Scuola di Boito, L'Asrael di Ferdinando Fontana' in Giorgi and Erkens, *Alberto Franchetti*, pp.54-76.

effect.[375] However, in Turin, as I will explore in more detail in chapter III, the operatic devices used by Franchetti drew quite a specific and positive response, one critic noting "the vertiginous pace of the music" in the depiction of hell "just as we would expect… with grand and powerful triumphant brass". Paradise was contrasted effectively as "calm, tranquil, seraphic, almost ecstatic… done perfectly on the harps and organ… Here the music, the instrumentation, the use of the chorus, the scenography, at a glance, everything contributes to rendering the illusion perfectly".[376] The scene moves from Latin antiphon quotations "Sancta Maria…" using plainsong melodies to a vernacular hymn to Jesus which ends with a love duet between the two transfigured angels.

Similarly, a new adaptation by Carlo Sernagiotto of Thomas Moore's poem *Paradise and the Peri* embellished the Persian, orientalist setting with a chorus of heavenly voices to open the Prologue, with the Peri kneeling before the gates of Heaven. The chorus opens with a conventional salutation to the Deity which has little to distinguish it from the pattern established in *Mefistofele*.[377] The stage direction in the surviving libretto gives the scene as "a billowing cloud envelops the scene", suggesting an effect reminiscent again of *Mefistofele*: "Greetings, O King of Kings!/The wondrous hymn/all praises singing/an angelic crown/unending giving".[378] The music and the staging effect impressed the correspondent of Venice's *Il Gazzettino*, but the placing of the chorus behind the cloud gauzes, to create spatial acoustics similar to *Mefistofele*, apparently suffered from a deadening of the sound which required larger choral forces to mitigate, perhaps repeating the mistake witnessed in the Genoa *Mefistofele*.[379]

Finally, I address attempts to depict Jesus Christ in a material form in two examples from the turn of the century, to show how, composers still resorted to existing 'celestial' tropes, while avoiding the more difficult issues about realising Christ

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[375] See chapter IV, *Il Gazzettino*, 27 December 1891.
[376] 'Sacco Nero', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 28 December 1890.
[377] *Carlo Sernagiotto, Il Paradiso e la Peri: Azione musicale in un prologo e tre atti* (Venezia: E. Brocco 1890). Sernagiotto seems only to have composed the prologue of the putative work and has otherwise largely disappeared from music history.
[378] "*Una fulgente nebulosa avvolge la scena/* Salve a te/ Re dei Re!/ L'arcana salmodia/ Lungo osannando intona/ Angelica corona/ Per l'infinita via."
[379] *Il Gazzettino*, 'Cose d'arte: La Fenice, Il Paradiso e la Peri', 29 January 1891.

himself on stage. Looking back to Boito's *Mefistofele*, it is possible to construct a dramaturgical rationale for Boito's decision to depict the voice of God in the Prologue, not as a single personification of the deity as in Goethe's *Faust*, but as a '*Chorus Mysticus*' which asks Mefistofeles the immortal question "T'è noto Faust?". The opera is principally about the relationship between Mefistofeles and Faust and would potentially be disrupted by introducing the voice of God directly into the Prologue. However, it is equally plausible that in 1868 Boito was aware that representation of God on stage, even unseen, would offend Catholic sensibility, the Church and potentially fall foul of the pre-approval of texts under the post-unification censorship laws. If we look at the similar dilemma faced by later composers drawn to new testament themes involving Christ as a character, we find a comparable reticence about embodying and envoicing God.[380] For some of these examples, only libretti survive, but for two – *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* by Giovanni Giannetti, and *La Tentazione di Gesù* by Carlo Cordara, piano vocal scores are extant which I will examine in this final section to highlight alternative choices for staging the divine.[381] One of these limits was the dramatic and musical characterisation of Christ. In its prose original, Giovanni Bovio had already self-censored his otherwise politically and theologically audacious elaboration of the episode of the woman caught in adultery, by prescribing that Christ not be seen on stage, only his voice heard.[382] This established a mode of discretion which was amplified by Giannetti's score in not setting the "Voice of Christ" at pitch, but spoken, with his final line "at full voice" - "Let

[380] The ancient literary topos that no human can see God face-to-face, in Catholic thought, can be seen encompassing dramatic depictions of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven. In Franchetti's Asrael Act I.Part ii, the Angel Nefta implores her to intercede for her prayer that she may be allowed to forsake the joys of heaven to return to earth to seek out her betrothed Asrael. Voices of Cherubim describe Mary's action of intercession: "Ecco Maria già ascende/ Verso il divino altare…/ Ecco Maria già stende/ Le braccie ad implorare…". The divine response is represented by a ray of light which falls on Nefta, whose veils fall away to reveal her in the garb of a nun – her mortal form in which she can return to earth ("*un raggio di luce vivissima scende d'in alto su di Nefta, I veli della quale cadono e ella appare vestita da una suora*"). In the final scene of the opera in which the lovers are transfigured in Heaven, Mary's presence is represented by her statue and altar over which a bright light falls and is showered with flowers ("la statua e l'altare della Madonna splendono a un tratto di luce vivissima: piovono fiori – Apotesosi.") *Asrael, Leggenda in quattro atti di Ferdinando Fontana. Musica di Alberto Franchetti* (Milan: Ricordi, 1888) pp. 57-58.

[381] "Chi di voi sia senza peccato scagli la prima pietra!" pp.143-144.

[382] Giovanni Bovio, *Cristo alla Festa di Purim 5th ed*. (Napoli: Fortunio, 1894). It is a remarkable irony that Bovio and Giannetti faced such censorial challenges in bringing this Biblical story to the stage over forty years after Piave and Verdi inserted the same scriptural verse into the conclusion of *Stiffelio* only to have the scene immediately suppressed.

him among you who is without sin cast the first stone". The critic of La Stampa, P.A. Omodei, reviewing the Italian premiere at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in Turin in December 1905, described the delivery of La Voce di Cristo as "strong and dignified" ("alta e solenna").[383] Omodei also identified a leitmotivic structure to the music including a motif representing Christ "grandioso e magniloquente", as well as three others for Maria Madgala, Giuda (Judas) and Etèra.[384]

Giannetti also set another new testament encounter between Mary Magdalene, the disciples and Jesus in *Il Nazareno* (1907). The text was another play which had been banned, this time in the years immediately after the fall of Rome, by Bovio's friend Felice Govean, *Gesù Cristo* (1873). Only the libretto for Giannetti's setting survives, and it is unclear whether the part of Christ is spoken or sung, but the longer lines he is given, particularly in the fourth act with his interrogation by Pilate, and the final act depicting the Crucifixion, suggest these might have been set at pitch, in contrast to his earlier opera. Composed in 1907, *Il Nazareno* was premiered (like *Cristo*) in South America (Buenos Aires, 20 January 1911), and seems not to have been produced in Italy.[385] However, this reticence or discretion about vocalising Christ as another operatic character continued in other settings well into the twentieth century, for example Vincenzo Michetti's *Maria di Magdala*, premiered at the Teatro Costanzi on 5 March 1918, in which Christ is listed among the actors rather than the singers in the surviving libretto.[386]

Two years before *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* finally reached the operatic stage in 1904 it was preceded, in the same theatre in Turin, by the premiere of another one act opera, *La Tentazione di Gesù*, by Cordara, the text a verse adaptation of the encounter between Satan and Christ in the desert by Arturo Graf.[387] Only a piano

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[383] "Chi di voi sia senza peccato scagli la prima pietra", Giovanni Giannetti, (Milan: Sonzogno, 1904) pp.143-4.
[384] '*Cristo all Festa di Purim* del Maestro Giannetti', *La Stampa*, 6 December 1905.
[385] Robert Letellier, The Bible in Music (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) p. 73.
[386] Vincenzo Michetti, *Maria di Magdala: Dramma biblico in tre episodi Libretto* (Roma: Capitolina, 1918); Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all' Opera*, vol. 1, p. 110. The run comprised four performances.
[387] In another of those seemingly incongruous programme choices, the work was preceded by the first two acts of Donizetti's *La Favorita*.

vocal reduction of the score seems to have survived (in the library of the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome), but from this and reception of the premiere we can assess how the opera strove to create a convincing musical and scenographic language for both the characters of Christ and Satan, as well as the representation of the depictions of the temptations. In this innovative setting, a prelude with a 'celestial theme' is followed by a 'prologo sinfonico' depicting the desolate landscape and dark atmosphere in which Satan appears to Christ in the wilderness. This uses the familiar 3/8 meter employed in many previous works as a diabolical marker, and reoccurs for Satan's main passages in the opera. A dialogue between Christ and Satan which elaborates the scriptural sources and each of the three temptations is represented scenically, and the rhythm and extreme harmonies and chromaticism of Satan's music contrasted with Jesus' more lyrical passages, focused on major tonality, using common time, notably in his *arioso* following his final repudiation of Satan. We could note though an absence of the type of parody or mimicry by Satan of Jesus that we have observed in early Mefistofelean examples. The lyrical musical expression of Jesus's invocation of God the Father is followed by an off-stage divided chorus of angels singing "Glory to God" and "Peace on Earth to men pure and faithful", accompanied also by the familiar off-stage trumpets, and emerging gradually louder from the distance, all reprising the celestial theme from the prelude.

The critic in *La Stampa* praised the young composer for his distinctive artistic fantasy, while identifying significant influences – the seriousness of the setting and characterisation, the elevated mystical, oratorical text suggested to him Wagner's *Parsifal*, while the melodic ideas and descriptive instrumentation reminded him of *The Beatitudes* of César Franck.[388] He noted that the subject and its seriousness were far from the "intrigues of love" which presumably readers expected somewhere in an opera. Meanwhile, he contrasted the 3/8 meter of Satan's music which opened the orchestral prelude and Satan's dance, with Jesus' music, "broad, serene, contemplative" in 3/4, and the "heavenly sweetness" with which his words were coloured in the music. The critic praised the staging, including set designs by Ugo

[388] 'La Tentazione di Gesù: mistero lirico in un atto di Arturo Graf. Musica di Carlo Cordara', *La Stampa*, 15 October, 1902, (initials i.a.v).

Gheduzzi, and costumes by Caramba, though seemed most taken with the dancers in the exotic vision of earthly riches.[389]

Conclusion

We can conclude that such experimental stagings of Christ attempted new models of depicting the divine, either differentiating Christ by giving his line spoken rather than sung, or making him sound more like a conventional 'verismo' tenor, while surrounded by more conventional markers of the celestial and diabolical, including rhythm and instrumentation, established during the nineteenth century. In the half century between *Mefistofele* and *Suor Angelica*, composers wrestled with how to integrate religious music in their own compositional style, questioning the boundary with scenes of traditional 'stage music', and going beyond the traditions of 'local colour' in terms of musical style, instrumentation and staging. The Catholic revival and its focus on women's piety meant that operatic depictions of female religiosity continued to rely heavily on existing tropes of speech and instrumentation, while the influence of Wagner and *fin-de-siècle* movements like art nouveau, symbolism and spiritualism suggested new possibilities. Some of the most progressive features, notably the question of new scenic effects to stage the supernatural, or the vocalisation of the figure of Christ himself, challenged ideas about what constituted the 'operatic' and the boundaries between sacred music, oratorio and opera. It is noteworthy that many of the most progressive attempts at staging religion had premieres or prominent early success in Turin, whose cultural and scientific milieu, including both anticlericalism, the growing social sciences, spiritualism and the Catholic mysticism of Arturo Graf, is the subject of my first case study chapter.

[389] Ugo Gheduzzi, a painter, was the leading set designer at the Teatro Regio in Turin, who had also designed sets for *Mefistofele*. The costumes were by Caramba, the stage name of the torinese Luigi Sapelli who would go on to be head of scenic design at La Scala, Archivio Storico Teatro Regio di Torino (ASTRT), Raccolta Gheduzzi.

Chapter III – *L'arcano incanto*: operatic visions of good and evil in post-unification Turin

> The artists who portray this character [Gounod's Mefistofeles] contribute to this false Mephistophelean characterisation, dressed like the devil of choreographed action and masked balls, red and black, two strong colours for example while the [Goethean] Mefistofeles was dressed in grey, an uncertain colour, you could say sceptical, but still *it is not the doubt of the philosophical devil which torments the modern intelligence, rather it is the affirmation of the Catholic demon*. [Cronaca Cittadina, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 5 January 1870][390]

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a sub-genre of opera in post-unification opera in Italy whose social and cultural significance has received little attention – the realm of the supernatural and the celestial, the diabolical and the divine. Inspired by the grand operas of Meyerbeer and aspects of the Faust myth, its musical and literary roots can be found in earlier nineteenth- century intellectual discourse about the relationship between the material aspects of music and staging and their metaphysical meaning. From the 1860s the potentiality of these Romantic ideas was amplified by the partial relaxation of censorship, and the growing attention of positivists to the scientific meaning of supernatural phenomena. These influences formed a particularly resonant cultural backdrop to opera in Turin – the first capital city of the new State, from which the new political dispensation towards freedom of expression spread, and which remained in the decades following unification the heart of positivist philosophy and theory. The tension between the scientific-positivist milieu in Turin and the enthusiastic reception of several metaphysical operas, particularly those with diabolical themes, lies at the heart of this chapter's analysis.

[390] Appendix 1 Source 17. Emphasis added.

I address a number of strands of scholarly discourse on the metaphysics of opera. As cited already, Gary Tomlinson posits in his collection of essays, *Metaphysical Song*:

> opera… has been a chief staging ground in elite Western culture for a belief in the existence of two worlds, one accessible to the senses, the other not. Operatic singing has supplied for the elite societies… a potent experience of a metaphysics as well as of a physics, of an immaterial as well as of a material world [391]

Tomlinson here focuses on singing, but the thesis is even more potent in a nineteenth century context applied to all the musical and scenic elements, and the relationship between the two. As he notes, Theodor Adorno saw that opera "strives paradoxically to preserve the magical elements of art within and with recourse to the disenchanted world".[392] John Tresch has sought to break down the dualism between the material and spiritual in grand opera by surfacing the metaphysical, charismatic and spiritual potential of the material effects created by technology.[393] This reassessment of the relationship between the Romantic and the technological has wider musical manifestations in the early nineteenth century development of new musical instruments and their physical and psychological effects.[394] While it is difficult immediately to detect the impact of these aural and visual technological effects in the reception history of grand opera in Italy, it is a particularly useful lens for thinking about the popularity of supernatural themes in post-Risorgimento Turin – a city in which rationalist positivists embraced the investigation of spiritualism, Friedrich Nietzsche was apt to lose himself in the Benjaminian idea of the metropolitan labyrinth, while penning his condemnation of Wagner's capitulation to

[391] Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: PUP, 1999) p.4
[392] Ibid., pp. 128-129.
[393] John Tresch, *The Romantic Machine* (Chicago: UCP) 2012; Tresch and Emily I Dolan, 'Meyerbeer, Balzac and the Opera Machine', *The Opera Quarterly* (2011) Advance publication edition.
[394] Carmel Raz, '"The Expressive Organ within us": Ether, ethereality and early Romantic ideas about Music and the Nerves', *19th Century Music*, vol. 38 no. 2 (2014) pp. 115-144.

the establishment in *Parsifal*, and before the first World War would enchant the artist Giorgio de Chirico with its metaphysical aesthetic potential.[395]

On the narrowly musicological level, the Italian debate raging about the fusing of national styles and the regeneration of home-grown operas was also reflected in Turin. The existing operatic model of fusing 'national' styles in grand opera, Giacomo Meyerbeer was, as Anna Tedesco has described, praised for this eclecticism during the 1850s and 1860s. Only later when the Wagnerian discourse about Meyerbeer became dominant, was this same eclecticism seen as negative and a symptom of a lack of originality.[396] The 'material' in grand opera was seen as inimical to the 'spiritual'. Revisionism in scholarly approaches has only recently begun to challenge the subjective assumptions behind this Wagnerian denigration of Meyerbeer, and given the material its due historical value.[397] As we shall see in the operas which this chapter focuses on, the material and the spiritual assumed a new cultural and scientific significance in Turin.

As Axel Körner has argued, Meyerbeer's popularity in Italy had strong associations with Risorgimentalist thinking. Mazzini's *Filosofia della Musica* and his correspondence during the 1830s reveal his belief in Meyerbeer's importance as an artist of the first rank on a moral as well as aesthetic level in whose works "the struggle [of good and evil] is intertwined with the whole musical conception". As Mazzini wrote:

> Meyerbeer is the highest artist of a transition period, in which the High-Priest cannot yet appear [...] And he has, as I said, moralised the Drama, making it an echo of the world and its eternal vital problem. He is not a votary of the

[395] De Chirico, who also referenced the significance of Turin to Nietzsche in his writings, in an interview in 1935, described Turin as "the most profound, enigmatic, unsettling city, not only in Italy but in the whole world" ("Torino è la città più profonda, la più enigmatica, la più inquietante non solo d'Italia ma di tutto il mondo"). Danilo Tacchino, *Torino: Storia e misteri di una provincial magica* (Rome: Edizione Mediterranee, 2007) p. 100.
[396] Anna Tedesco, *'Opera a macchina': La fortuna di Giacomo Meyerbeer in Italia dal 1840 al 1870* (Tesi di dottorato: Università di Bologna, 1999).
[397] For example, Mary Ann Smart, 'Every word made flesh: *Les Huguenots* and the incarnation of the invisible' in *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth Century Opera* (Berkeley: UCP, 2005) pp. 101-131; Cormack Newark, 'Metaphors for Meyerbeer', *Journal of the Royal Musicological Association*, vol. 127, no. 1 (2002) pp. 23-43.

> *l'Art pour l'Art* music; he is the prophet of the music with a mission, the music standing immediately below Religion. [...] One would say that he was given to us as a symbol of the future union, a link between the two worlds [of Italian and German music], the harmonising of which will constitute the highest musical expression of the future.[398]

The Italian attraction to a new cultural cosmopolitanism had also overtaken the literary world by the 1860s. As Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol describes in her survey of the relationship between music and literature in Italy between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *Scapigliati* – most significantly among them in terms of opera, Arrigo Boito, and the playwright and poet Ferdinando Fontana – responded to the fantastical and supernatural elements of German poetry and literature, particularly the demonic in the works of ETA Hoffmann, and sought to overcome the polarity between Nordic and Italian literary models by developing a native concept, a "fantastico 'mediterraneo' alternativo".[399]

This chapter will trace the manifestation of these themes through the reception in Turin of new and revived operas including Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo*, Gounod's *Faust*, *Mefistofele* by Arrigo Boito, and Alberto Franchetti's *Asrael* (to a libretto by Fontana). All four operas have varying degrees of association with the Faust legend and Goethe's epic. The European hagiographic obsession with Goethe was on a par with Shakespeare, Schiller and Dante, and this applied equally in Italy as elsewhere. As Körner points out, Mazzini's admiration for Meyerbeer's operas was comparable to his literary idolisation of Goethe.[400] In Turin the interest was reflected in biographical writings as well as exploration of Goethe's works in the pages of *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, established as a weekly cultural supplement to the daily *La*

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[398] Mazzini to Emilie Ashurst Venturi, 21 May 1867, *Edizione nazionale* (n. 9), vol. 85, 44-47, 45 ff., quoted in Axel Körner, 'From Hindustan to Brabant: Meyerbeer's L'Africana and municipal cosmopolitanism in post-unification Italy', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol.29 Special Issue 1 March 2017 pp. 77.
[399] Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, *Musica e Letteratura in Italia tra ottocento e novecento* (Milano: Sansoni, 2000) p. 169.
[400] Körner, From Hindustan to Brabant, p. 78.

Gazzetta Piemontese, which included reflections on the parallels between Goethe's early life and his writings.[401]

However, rather than Faust himself, the focus here will be on the significance of the *Mephistophelian* (demonic) themes, and heavenly and angelic visions. Certainly, Faust's own agency, thirst for knowledge or heroism can often seem less important in these operatic versions than either the melodrama of his amorous encounters and wager with Mephistopheles, or the opportunity to represent on stage, or through music, the supernatural, both diabolical and celestial. The chapter will conclude, however, by highlighting one further example, *La Tentanzione di Gesù* by Carlo Cordara, whose libretto was written by the poet, critic and Professor of Literature at the University of Turin, Arturo Graf, which emphasises how this interest in the demonic persona in opera influenced the treatment of other religious adaptations, drawing in both positivist intellectuals as well as appealing to conventional Catholic taste. These case studies illustrate on the one hand a new phase in the production and adaptation of cultural texts and narratives which question the place of religion in the new Italian state, while challenging some of the existing assumptions about the cultural tastes and interests of both the liberal, anticlerical, rationalist elite, and the Catholic majority.

Theatre and opera in Turin was a particularly rich culture at the protracted birth of the Italian state with twelve theatres for a population of only 339,000 by the turn of the century. As well as the Teatro Regio, opera in Turin was regularly given alongside ballet, drama, operetta, vaudeville and a range of entertainments at the Carignano (whose ownership was transferred along with the Regio from the Court to the Comune in 1864) the Alfieri, Balbo, Scribe, and Vittorio Emanuele theatres, but also

[401] C.U. Posocco, 'Il primo amore di W. Goethe', *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, 1880, vol. 36 4/9-11/9 pp. 285-6. This biographical interest had also inspired a melodrama by Meyerbeer entitled *La Jeunesse de Goethe ou L'etudiant de Strasbourg*, based on his *Sturm und Drang* youth, interpolating extracts from his poetry and drama including a Faust scene and chorus of Angels ("the immense seraphic host of the second Faust"). Sadly, as Letellier recounts, the work was never produced, and the manuscript lost. Robert Ignatius Letellier, *An Introduction to the dramatic works of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Oxford: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 212-217.

occasionally at others (listed below).[402] The Carignano, which staged spring and autumn seasons, enjoyed a reputation as strong as the Regio, boasting many local premieres of important works including Donizetti's *La favorita*, *I puritani* by Bellini, Auber's *La muta di Portici* and, significantly in our context, *Roberto il diavolo*. The opening in 1859 of the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele capable of staging equestrian and acrobatic performances, further challenged the reputation of the Regio, also mounting opera productions considered of much higher quality in a period in which the Regio struggled both financially and artistically.

Fig. 23 Capacity of Turin theatres around 1900[403]

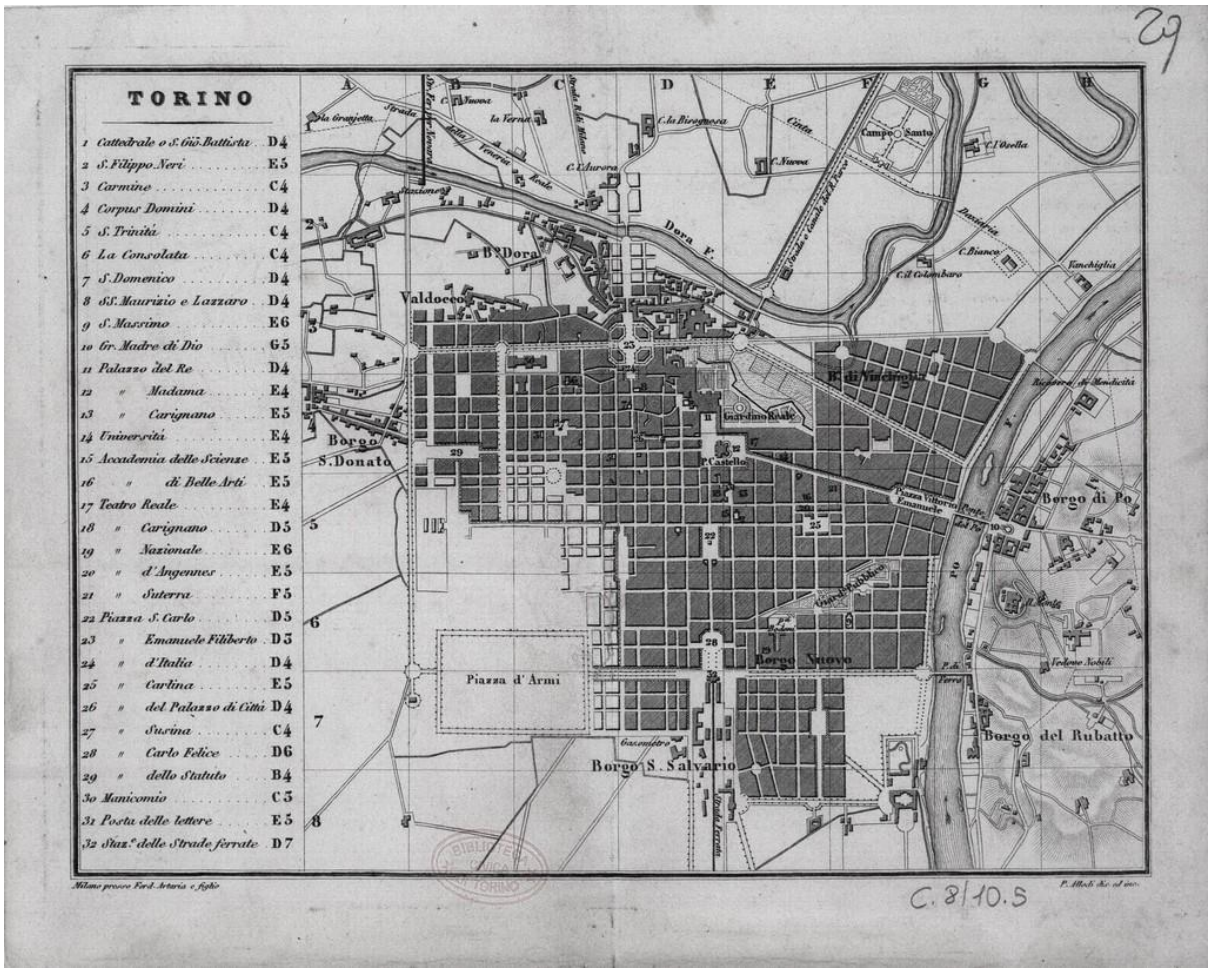
Theatre	**Capacity**
Regio	1792
Vittorio Emanuele II	2000
Carignano	1320
Alfieri	1959
Balbo	1417
Gerbino	1220
Rossini	866
Nazionale	911
Scribe	1165
Gianduja	750
Arena	1000
Torinese	1012
Total theatre capacity	15412

As Alberto Basso and Mercedes Viale Ferrero have shown, there was, not surprisingly, considerable interchange between these theatres of personnel, sets and costumes.[404] Like other cities, the gradual withdrawal of court subsidy for theatre

[402] Alberto Basso, 'La Musica', in Umberto Levra (a cura), *Storia di Torino: Da Capitale politica a capitale industriale, vol. 7* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001) pp. 996-8.
[403] Basso, *Il Teatro della Città, vol. 2* (Turin: Casa di Risparmio di Torino, 1976) p. 513.
[404] Basso, 'La Musica', in Levra (a cura), *Storia di Torino: La città nel Risorgimento 1798-1864, vol. 6* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000) pp. 780-781; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *La Scenografia Dalle origini al 1936: Storia del Teatro Regio di Torino, vol.3* (Casa di Risparmio di Torino: Torino, 1980) p. 418.

and opera, and the transfer of responsibility to the municipality, just as the evolution of grand opera imposed even greater demands on theatres, tested the existing system of production, sometimes to breaking point.

Fig. 24 Topographical plan of Turin (1890), Biblioteca Civica Centrale di Torino.[405]


TORINO
1 Cattedrale o S. Giò Battista D4
2 S. Filippo Neri E5
3 Carmine C4
4 Corpus Domini D4
5 S. Trinità C4
6 La Consolata C4
7 S. Domenico D4
8 SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro D4
9 S. Massimo E6
10 Gr. Madre di Dio G5
11 Palazzo del Re D4
12 " Madama E4
13 " Carignano E5
14 Università E4
15 Accademia delle Scienze E5
16 " di Belle Arti E5
17 Teatro Reale E4
18 " Carignano D5
19 " Nazionale E6
20 " d'Angennes E5
21 " Suterra F5
22 Piazza S. Carlo D5
23 " Emanuele Filiberto D5
24 " d'Italia D4
25 " Carlina E5
26 " del Palazzo di Città D4
27 " Susina C4
28 " Carlo Felice D6
29 " dello Statuto B4
30 Manicomio C3
31 Posta delle lettere E5
32 Staz.e delle Strade ferrate D7
Milano presso Ferd. Artaria e figlio
Valdocco
B.a Dora
Borgo S. Donato
Piazza d'Armi
Borgo Nuovo
Borgo S. Salvario
Borgo del Rubatto
Borgo di Po
Dora F.
Campo Santo
P.a di Vinchiglia
P.a Castello
Giardino Reale
Piazza Vittorio Emanuele
Ponte Isabella
Ponte di Po
Ponte Vittorio Emanuele
Ponte Umberto I
Ponte Regina Margherita
Ponte Napoleone
Ponte Mosca
Ponte Ferrovia
Ponte Girardi
Ponte Balbis
Ponte Carlo Alberto
Ponte Ferrovia
Ponte Ferrovia
Ponte Ferrovia

It is important to enter a caveat about the extent of evidence available about one aspect of the supernatural in opera in Italy during the nineteenth century, the reception of its staging. Several scholars have questioned the value placed on staging generally in Italy, despite the increasingly spectacular effects demanded by grand opera. The production and reception history of the spectacular scenic elements of grand opera in Italy was indeed far from a smooth or uncontested migration from its French origins. Mercedes Viale Ferrero shows that the scenic elements of the heavily censored adaptation of Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell* in Turin in 1840 was poorly received not because of the material and technological effects themselves, but because the conservative audience wouldn't countenance this type of opera betraying the classical aesthetics of the beginning of the nineteenth century.[406] Later on, as Cormac Newark has noted, in his tracing of the evolution of the *bolognese* reception of grand opera between the *Guglielmo Tell* adaptation in that city also in 1840, and the *Don Carlos* premiere in 1867, reviews of opera were often simply perfunctory in their attention or interest in the scenic elements of a production. This was common across Italy in this period and we find it also in Turin when, for example, in 1873 the critic of *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, reviewing a production of *Faust* at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in an article of over five hundred words, dispatched the staging with the phrase "the backcloths were good, the costumes were passable".[407] As a result we might want to emphasise the wider cultural and artistic context for the production of these operas to shed more light on what associations the supernatural themes would have held for audiences. As we will find in Turin, there was an increasingly receptive audience for their exploration, both from a conventional Catholic position and amongst the spectrum of the liberal cultural and scientific elite, which I will sketch out in the following section.

One illustration of how the liberal-minded anticlerical elite wanted to present themselves can be taken from reaction to the Turin premiere of *La forza del destino* on 9 February 1873 when the more devout among the audience at the Regio took

[406] Mercedes Viale Ferrero, 'Guglielmo Tell a Torino 1839-1840', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 14 (1979), pp. 390-392. As Ferrero underlines, the 'inertia' of the torinese audience was such that the same bowdlerised version of Tell was still being produced at the Regio in 1873-4, by which time the political context for its censoring, and the system of censorship, had decisively changed.

[407] Teatri, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 22 October 1873.

offence at the depiction of liturgical rites and symbols on stage.[408] Speaking for them in the consiglio comunale on 3 March, Nicolis de Robilant expressed his sadness that:

> the city's main theatre, subsidised by the Comune, saw the sacred religious rites of the Catholic religion of the vast majority of citizens publicly prostituted on stage. In Verdi's score of *La forza del destino* you have a grotesque scene in the first Act in which the chorus sing indecently the same words that the faithful utter while making the sign of the Cross. In the second Act right in the middle of the stage is presented an altar exactly the same as Catholics use during Divine Service on top of which is a Madonna identical to the holy image of her which the *torinesi* are used to venerating for centuries in one of our local churches. In the third Act the sacred name of Christ is enunciated like that of Bacchus or Venus, and finally in Act 4 there is an unworthy parody of the alms-giving which takes place at the gates of every cloister… unfortunately the current state of our laws allows such things but the speaker didn't understand how it could be permitted by the Municipality subsidising the theatre, and how taxpayers could be expected to support the use of their taxes in such a way.[409]

The Mayor, Felice Rignon, replied sardonically that, as an advocate of complete freedom of conscience for all religious denominations, he could see nothing to regret in the performance. He claimed that the same opera, uncut, had already been performed in Rome before 1870, under the full rigour of the Papal regime (he was mistaken of course).[410] He observed that the singers dressed as monks were wearing simple crosses rather than crucifixes, that the altar scene was executed very modestly, and that in the last act the character was a lay brother rather than a priest. Despite such clerical concerns about the abuse of ecclesiastical authority in stage performances, the intellectual climate in Turin was more heavily influenced by the philosophical school of positivism and freemasonry, which, as I discuss in the following section, displayed a growing interest in supernatural phenomena

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[408] Guilio Bissaldi, 'Rassegna Musicale' *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 12 February 1873.
[409] ASCT, *Raccolta Atti Municipali di Torino* – Annata 1873, parte I, pp. 200-201. (See Appendix 1 Source 13).
[410] See chapter V for a discussion of the censored version of *La forza del destino* in Rome.

traditionally associated with religious superstition, but which the Catholic Church viewed as unorthodox and even dangerous.

The intellectual climate and supernatural phenomena in post-unification Turin

Despite losing its political pre-eminence as a capital city, Turin's status as an intellectual capital grew in the decades after Unification, primarily as the centre of positivism, attracting numerous academics to the city, whose growing status and profile moved into the realm of the modern celebrity. The positivist school, with its belief in the application of scientific principles and observable natural causes of the human condition, influenced not just the embryonic social sciences, but also literature and the arts. One of the foremost figures of Turin's positivist milieu was Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), Professor of medical law and public hygiene at the University of Turin from 1876. There he developed and popularised his theories of crimogenesis and criminal anthropology, through books such as *L'Uomo Delinquente* and *La Donna Delinquente* (*The Criminal Man* and *The Criminal Woman*) based on the theory of inherited criminal traits rather than the influence of external social conditions.[411] Lombroso also extended his theories of criminal pathology to the realm of artistic creativity, in a work, later much revised, *Genio e Follia* (*Genius and Madness*), which applied highly subjective and anecdotal biographical information about artists (including composers) to extrapolate an etiological explanation for the qualities of their artistic output, for example excessive masturbation by an adolescent Giacomo Leopardi was associated with the pessimism of his poetry.[412] In articles for the Turin-based *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, isolating the different tendencies of the music of Rossini, Beethoven and Wagner, Lombroso claimed that music had a

[411] Cesare Lombroso, *L'Uomo Delinquente* (Turin: Bocca, 1889); with Guglielmo Ferrero, *La Donna Delinquente, la prostituta, la donna normale* (Turin: Roma, 1893). Weaknesses in Lombroso's scientific method, his popular profile and Socialist views all contributed to antipathy towards him from medical and academic colleagues.

[412] Jonathan R Hiller, 'Lombroso and the science of literature and opera', in Paul Knepper and P.J. Ystehede (eds), *The Cesare Lombroso Handbook* (Routledge, 2012) pp. 233. See also Antonio Serravezza, *Musica e Scienza nell'età del positivismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996) for a comparative survey of positivism's interest in the effects of music and the origins of musical inspiration and creativity.

uniform effect on each listener, regardless of his or her intelligence or other characteristics.[413]

Other important figures who had adopted Turin as their home at this time included the Ligurian Edmondo de Amicis (1846-1908), author of *Cuore* (Heart), the most emblematic bourgeois novel of Liberal Italy, which incorporated Lombrosian observations of criminal pathology and physiognomy in its tale of childhood discovery of the difference among the regional populations of the new Italy as represented in his school classroom.[414] A close friend of de Amicis in Turin was poet and critic, Arturo Graf (1848-1913), who had been born in Greece to a German father and Italian mother, raised in Romania and educated in Naples. He became Professor of Literature in Turin in 1876, the same year as Lombroso's arrival. In 1882 he co-founded the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*. Graf's early criticism focused on mediaeval myths and legends and then in 1889, an avowedly popular history of the Devil, which was dedicated to De Amicis, in which he surveyed the cultural manifestations of the Devil including operatic tropes like "the devil-compact".[415] These works displayed an attachment to a type of evolutionary positivism influenced by Darwinism. Yet Graf's poetry has been described as far more indebted to the influence of the *Scapigliatura* movement, and characterised as more evidently symbolist and pessimist.[416] By 1905 Graf had undergone a process of religious conversion to a profession of faith rooted in Catholic tradition but stretching beyond Catholicism. This he sought to reconcile with his ethical, scientific and artistic principles, and Socialist politics, articulated in an essay *Per una Fede*.[417]

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[413] Cesare Lombroso, 'Le più recenti inchieste scientifiche sui suoni e la musica'*, Rivista musicale italiana*, vol. I, 1894, pp. 117-130.
[414] Edmondo de Amicis, *Cuore* (Milan: Treves, 1886); Hiller, 'Lombroso and the science of literature and opera', pp. 235-238.
[415] Arturo Graf, *Miti, leggende e superstizioni del Medio Evo vol. 1* (Turin: Loescher, 1892); *Il Diavolo* (Milan: Treves, 1889).
[416] For Graf's place within Italian literature and criticism see Girolamo de Liguori, *I Baratri della Ragione: Arturo Graf e la cultura del secondo Ottocento* (Manduria: Lacaita, 1986).
[417] Arturo Graf, 'Per una fede', *Nuova Antologia*, June 1905, published separately the following year including an essay on *Il Santo* by Antonio Fogazzaro, whose own spiritual and religious crises heavily influenced his novels [*Per una fede, seguito da Giustificazioni e commenti e da un, Saggio sul 'Santo' do Fogazzaro* (Milano: Treves, 1906]. Graf was also influenced by Tolstoy's ethical Socialism and the themes within his 1899 novel *Resurrection*, whose operatic adaptation by Cesare Hanau and Franco Alfano, *Risurrezione*, was premiered at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in Turin in November 1904 (see chapter II). For a

This Turin elite enjoyed expansive opportunities for cultural exchange and debate through numerous institutes and societies, as well as an energetic and expanding daily and periodical press. Vittorio Bersezio (1828-1900), editor of *La Gazzetta Piemontese* (*La Stampa* from 1894) created a supplement, *La Gazzetta Letteraria* from 1878, which combined commentary on local, national and international arts, science and philosophy.[418] The *Rivista Musicale Italiana* under publisher Giuseppe Bocca, promoted Bocca's positivist interests, notably through inviting figures like Lombroso to expound their theories about the pathology of music. Bocca also promoted the works of Richard Wagner, both through the magazine and enthusiastically in his own music salon.[419] Under the editorship of Giuseppe Depanis, who with his father played a key role in the Teatro Regio from the 1880s, *La Gazzetta Letteraria* increased its own coverage of music, also promoting Wagner, as well as other preferences in extensive pieces, including a very long obituary of Gounod in 1893, and reporting on important musical occasions in Turin like the local premiere of Franchetti's *Asrael*.[420]

Jonathan Hiller suggests examples of how Lombroso's positivist theories about the physiognomy of race and criminal pathology directly influenced not only writers like De Amicis, and prominent exponents of verismo like Verga and Capuana, but also the operatic outputs of this period, for example race in Boito and Verdi's *Otello* and Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo*, the 'problem' of the South in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and religious and civic toleration of the Jews in *L'Amico Frtiz*. However plausible some of these examples, Hiller confuses them with Lombroso's reading of Wagner as an example of the degeneracy of genius, suggesting it explains Wagner's "enduring unpopularity in Italy". Yet as we have just seen this was just the period and

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discussion of Graf's spiritual journey see Clara Allasia (a cura), *Arturo Graf militante: Saggi scelti* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1998) especially the introduction by Marziano Guglielminetti, 'Graf Militante' pp.21-31 and Allasia, 'Notizia' pp. 43-53.

[418] Giuseppe Zaccaria, 'Le riviste e l'idea di letteratura' in *Storia di Torino, vol. 7* pp. 965-969.

[419] Elvidio Surian, *Introduction to Rivista Musicale Italiana*, (RIPM, 2011) pp. ix-x.

[420] Giorgio Rampone, *Musica e Spettacolo a Torino fra Otto e Novecento* (Archivio Storico della Città di Torino: 2009) p. 10.

milieu in which Wagner was becoming popular in Turin.[421] Rather than suggesting a positivist reading of the naturalistic aspects of these operas, this chapter will focus instead on the positivist interest in supernatural and metaphysical phenomena, and the wider fascination with spiritualism in the city, through their manifestation in opera. *La Gazzetta Letteraria* was a main forum for debate among positivists about the relationship between science and the supernatural and the interpretation of traditional, theological concepts of good and evil in a rational world and culture seeking to influence the direction of the new State. Regular contributors included Graf, who had ended *Il Diavolo* with the declaration that:

> The task begun by Christ eighteen centuries ago has been completed by civilisation. It has conquered hell and has forever redeemed us from the Devil.[422]

By civilisation Graf intends scientific progress and rationalism. Graf defended his work in the pages of *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, in response to an article by Vittorio Bersezio, entitled 'The Power of Evil'.[423] If civilisation had conquered the devil as Graf proclaimed, the cultural elite in Turin seemed perennially fascinated with him, and ideas of the supernatural and occult. This, Graf acknowledged in his article, concluding:

> Does the Devil exist or not?... I will just recount a story known to historians today, and leave the reader to judge for himself. In a certain city, a group of spiritualists, unsure of the existence of the devil, and eager to clear any doubt, thought to summon him to find out the truth directly. They conjured him up one clear night, and after much praying the devil appeared to them, angry and

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[421] Hiller, 'Lombroso and the science of literature and opera', p. 243. Hiller cites Alan Mallach for his assertion of Wagner's unpopularity in Italy, though Mallach summarises Wagner's controversial but growing popularity more accurately than this [Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, pp.16-17].

[422] "L'opera incominciata da Cristo diciotto secoli sono la civiltà l'ha compiuta. La civiltà ha debellato l'inferno e ci ha per sempre redenti dal diavolo." Graf, *Il Diavolo* (a cura di Carlachiara Perrone) (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1980) p. 287.

[423] Vittorio Bersezio, 'La Potenza di Male', *Gazzetta Letteraria*, no.43, 26 October 1889; Arturo Graf, 'Pel mio Diavolo e per me', *Gazzetta Letteraria,* no.44, 2 November 1889.

> in bad shape, and confirmed, on oath, that had had never existed. But of course it's possible, as is his habit, that he was lying.[424]

In the twentieth century, Turin's reputation as a city of the occult, magic and satanic practices gained, from the 1960s a strong hold on the popular imagination and culture.[425] However, its origins seem to date initially to the *Risorgimento* period, when the constitutional reforms initiated in the Kingdom of Sardinia from 1848 included the granting of civic and religious liberty to religious minorities, including the significant local community of Waldensian Protestants, and Jews. Asylum was also granted to a number of occultists from Austrian Lombardy-Venetia. Harbouring such heretics was exacerbated by the anticlerical politics of the Savoyard monarchy and Cavour, culminating in the fall of Rome in 1870, when the clerical press in Rome began to dub Turin as the "città del diavolo".[426] Compounding this religious toleration in the mind of clerical opinion, the positivist atmosphere in Turin in the decades after Unification further alienated its culture from the Church through its close association with Turin's importance as a centre of Freemasonry.

The physical regeneration of Turin celebrated the scientific progress of the new Italian state, as well as its monarchy, amidst the baroque splendour of the piedmontese capital. Even here, however, we can see the relationship between scientific positivism, myth and metaphysics, expressed in aesthetic form. Atop the masonic pyramid of the fountain in Piazza Statuto by Luigi Belli, celebrating the completion of the tunnel at Cenisio (Fréjus) between the new Italy and France in

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[424] Ibid. (See Appendix 1 Source 14)

[425] These contemporary manifestations are vividly recounted by two journalists, Vittorio Messori and Aldo Cazzullo, *Il Mistero di Torino: due ipotesi su una capitale incompresa* (Milano: Mondadori, 2005).

[426] PIedmontese laws against religious orders prompted prophecies by the priest Don Giovanni Bosco (and later Saint) in 1854 and 1855 that terrible evil would befall his family if the laws were enacted. Following his first warning died in quick succession the Queen Mother, the Queen and the King and Queen's infant son. Michael Ribotta, 'The Big Rat and the Mad Priest of Turin: Don Bosco's relationship with Prime Minister Rattazzi', *Journal of Salesian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall, 1996) pp. 55-74; Denis Mack Smith, *Cavour: A Biography* (London: Methuen, 1985) p. 79.

1879, the figure of Lucifer, the classical bringer of the light of science, stands looking out over the city.[427]

[427] Rosanna Maggio Serra, 'La cultura artistica nella seconda metá dell'Ottocento' in *La Storia di Torino vol.7*, pp.581-582; Renzo Villa, 'Cesare Lombroso and his school: from anthropology to medicine and law' in Hiller (ed), *The Cesare Lombroso Handbook,* p. 15.

Fig. 25 Monumento al Traforo del Cenisio (Luigi Belli, 1879)

A growing interest in exploring paranormal phenomena embroiled Lombroso and fellow positivists in the more controversial areas of somnambulism, magnetism and clairvoyance, which they hoped their positivist methods would help to explain. As Clara Gallini has explored in her history of somnambulism and magnetism in nineteenth-century Italy, Turin held a special place among practitioners of these arts and therapies going back to the French revolutionary period. The flourishing interest in magnetism and the occult among liberal, masonic, Francophile circles was assisted by the tolerance of the regime after 1851.[428] During the 1850s Gallini estimates that at least five practitioners were active (alongside numerous associated periodicals promoting discussion of magnetism) one of whom, Francesco del Guidi, commended Piedmont as "the only part of Italy where there is a good atmosphere for magnetism".[429] However, by 1867 there had been a backlash from anticlerical polemicists against signs of spiritualism among Catholic practitioners like Guidi.[430] The reaction of the Catholic Church was no less hostile to such investigations which seemed to combine pseudo-scientific method with supernatural phenomena beyond the explanation of official theology.[431]

The growing popularity of spiritualism across Europe and America fuelled an industry of public performance as well as private séances. This current of interest reached a new level of public spectacle and controversy when Turin was taken by storm in Spring 1886 by theatrical performances staged by the Belgian magnetiser Donato (pseudonym of Alfred D'Hont), having made his name in other European cities and soon elsewhere in Italy.[432] His technique he termed *fascinazione*, meaning literally 'fascination' but also a synonym for 'seduction', as well as evoking ideas of ancient curses and the gaze of the Medusa.[433]

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[428] Carlo Francovich, Storia della Massoneria in Italia (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1975) p. 237, quoted in Clara Gallini, *La Sonnambula meravigliosa: Magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento italiano* (Rome: Feltrinelli, 2013) p.85.
[429] Gallini, *La Sonnambula meravigliosa*, pp. 97.
[430] Ibid., p. 106.
[431] Ibid., pp. 161-174.
[432] Ibid., pp. 211-256; Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect* (Chicago: CUP, 2008) pp. 64-65, 70-73.
[433] Gallini, *La Sonnambula meravigliosa*, p. 214.

Fig. 26 Playbill, 'Fascinazione Donatistica', Teatro Scribe (1886) ASCT, Collezione Simeom, C/55.

TEATRO SCRIBE

Per la sera di **GIOVEDI' 22 Aprile 1886**, alle ore 8 1|2 precise

SECONDA RAPPRESENTAZIONE STRAORDINARIA

delle celebri esperienze di

FASCINAZIONE DONATISTICA

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DONATO

Direttore della Rivista Illustrata fisio-psicologica « Il Magnetismo »

Queste esperienze assolutamente nuove che hanno fatto accorrere tutta Parigi e che valsero a **Donato** una celebrità universale

sono eseguite sugli Spettatori e su Giovanotti di Torino

Nessuno aveva mai fatto esperienze di questo genere e nessuno è giunto fino ad oggi ad eguagliarlo

QUADRO DELLE PRINCIPALI ESPERIENZE

eseguite dal sig. DONATO sugli abitanti delle città ove egli tiene le sue sedute.

1° Prova di fascino su persone sveglie.

Paralisi — Catalessi	Contrazioni parziali o generali	Movimenti involontari ed incoercibili,
Cataplessia — Mutismo — Afonia	Anestesia — Analgesia	ecc., ecc.

(Con queste prove ripetute il sig. DONATO si sforza di sottomettere completamente alla sua volontà il più gran numero possibile di spettatori che, una volta vinti, diventano suoi soggetti o pazienti e sono atti a subire le esperienze ulteriori)

2° Esperienze di suggestione allucinatoria su soggetti immersi nello stato inconsciente.

Una festa pubblica — Il sarto.	Il nuoto — Il dentista	Un'udienza al Tribunale Correzionale
I pompieri — Risa e lagrime.	Il biglietto all'ordine.	La fiera del piacere — Il concerto.
Il suicidio — Al Circo.	Gli sciancati e il balbuziente.	I naufraghi — I pescatori.
I lottatori — Dal fotografo.	Il banchetto — Il portinaio.	Suggestioni persistenti o mutate (variate all'infinito), ecc., ecc.
Il barbiere — Calore e frigidità.	Il pattinatore — Gli acrobati.	

(La maggior parte di queste esperienze costituiscono vere scene a più personaggi. I soggetti diventati inconscienti realizzano come vere macchine viventi ogni volontà del sig. DONATO. Richiamati in seguito allo stato normale, essi non ricordano per nulla ciò che hanno detto o fatto).

3° Fenomeni di estasi e stupore provocato.

Ai piedi della croce.	I gladiatori — L'orto.	La scoperta di un cadavere.
Le rose.	La fontana monumentale.	La zattera della Medusa, ecc., ecc.

(Queste esperienze differiscono sopratutto dalle precedenti in questo: che i pazienti, invece di obbedire ad una suggestione orale, sono colpiti dal fascino della fisonomia e prendono involontariamente attitudini catalettiche tali che essi formano inconsciamente curiosi quadri viventi).

PREZZI D'INGRESSO

Platea L. 2 — Poltrone L. 3 (non compreso l'ingresso)

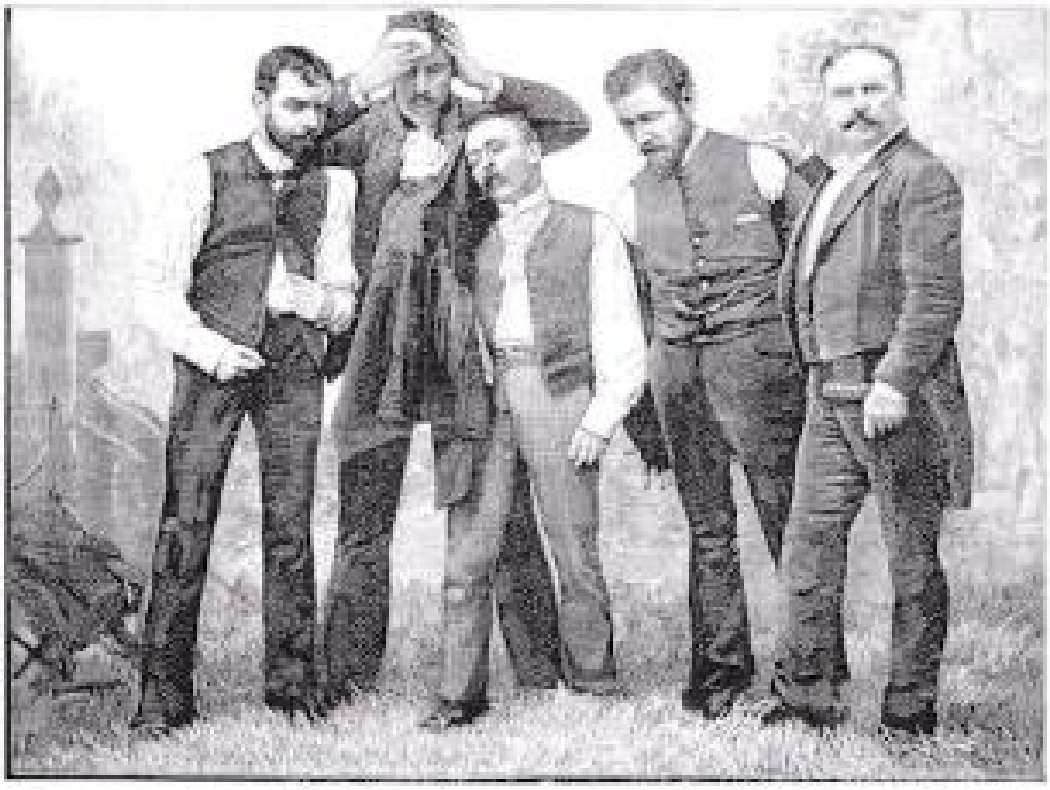
PALCHI: I Ordine L. 8 (non comp. l'ingr.) - II Ordine L. 8 (non comp. l'ingr.) - III Ordine L. 6 (non compr. l'ingr.) IV Ordine L. 4 (non compreso l'ingresso).

Il Camerino del Teatro è aperto tutti i giorni per la locazione dei posti, palchi e poltrone.

In these he hypnotised through the power of eye-to-eye contact large groups of individuals, usually young men, invited from the audience. When hypnotised they performed a range of quotidian activities from modern urban life, including a tailor, a landlord, an elector casting a vote and even a suicide.[434] The process and controversy was described in detail by Lombroso's colleague Enrico Morselli, head of Turin's Psychiatric hospital, in *La Gazzetta Letteraria*.[435] The Teatro Scribe, which had been a successful opera theatre, had seen its reputation diminish since the mid-century, but the Donato performances drew audiences from the elite to the lower classes.[436]

[434] *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 30 April 1886.
[435] Enrico Morselli, Il magnetismo animale, la fascinazione e gli stati ipnotici, *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, 18 May 1886, p. 37.
[436] The Teatro Scribe sits on Via Verdi, close to both the Teatro Regio and Teatro Vittorio Emanuele, in the shadow of the almost completed Mole Antonelliana, which finally opened in 1889. Luciano Tamburini, *I Teatri di Torino* [Turin: Edizioni dell'Albero, 1966]. The Mole, which became the symbol of industrial Turin, was commissioned by the Jewish community of Turin in 1864 and originally conceived as a grand synagogue in commemoration of the religious liberty granted by the reforms of 1848, but due to the grandiose conception of its architect Alessandro Antonelli, the site of the synagogue was moved, and the Mole bought by the Comune. It was briefly the tallest building in Europe. F. Rosso, *Alessandro Antonelli e la Mole di Torino* (Turin: Stampatori, 1977).

Fig. 27 Donato with three hypnotised subjects *L'Illustrazione italiana*[437]



[437] *L'Illustrazione italiana* 1886, p. 463.

Presumably the choice for these performances of mass hypnotism of the Teatro Scribe, named after the primo ottocento's librettist *par excellence* who provided the source material for Bellini's *La Sonnambula* was a practical, rather than a deliberate or an ironic one. Nevertheless, among more conventional theatrical performances, Turin saw an unusually high number of performances of *La Sonnambula* (five at the Teatro Regio alone between 1868 and 1900 including a production in 1886, as well as numerous others at the Carignano and Vittorio Emanuele).[438] Morselli was impressed by the impact on Donato's subjects of his technique. He was particularly interested in the hypercustic effects on hypnotised subject, and the profound impact of music on them.[439] Lombroso, having examined some of Donato's volunteers whom he discovered to be traumatised by the experience, was concerned about the popular usurpation of scientific enquiry and the potential misuse of such techniques particularly for sexual crimes against women. He was instrumental in having Donato's performances banned for fraudulence. Yet he was later convinced by Euspasia Palladio, a famous spiritualist, who even conjured Lombroso's mother for him at a private séance.[440]

Despite the prohibition on Donato's performances, on 10 March 1890 another Belgium hypnotist, Jean-Lambert Pickman, a self-styled *'Lisseur des pensées'* (mind-reader) returned to the stage of the Teatro Scribe to gives performances in which hypnotised subjects were provoked into acting out instructions through transmission of thoughts by Pickman, who had hypnotised himself, accompanied by music on a zither – music being recognised as being helpful in creating the state of somnambulism.[441] One can imagine that the choice of zither, with its other-worldly timbre and associations with gypsy music, could also have been significant. Again, the elite of Turin turned out to witness the spectacle, including, according to the press reports, both Lombroso and Arturo Graf. Pickman's show, and Lombroso's interest in his technique, was followed closely in the Turin press and even *La Civiltà*

[438] *Il Teatro Regio di Torino, elenchi e cronologie* a cura di Oscar Strona (Turin: AEDA, 1970) pp.82-89; Tamburini, Massimo Scaglione, *Il Teatro Carignano: storia e cronache* (Turin: Edizioni del periodico dello spettacolo 'in teatro', La Stampa, 1989).
[439] Morselli, 'Il magnetismo animale', p. 37.
[440] Gallini, *La Sonnambula meravigliosa*, pp. 227-230.
[441] *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 11, 13, 17 March 1890.

Cattolica ran a long article in which Pickman was condemned as a charlatan and the interest of rationalist scientists like Lombroso mocked as superstition.[442] Theatrical fashion for the supernatural and the occult was broader than such displays of hypnotism, just one example including in 1897 performances of the play *Spiritismo* by Victorien Sardou, who was himself interested in occult and spiritualist subjects, as was Luigi Capuana who also wrote a play on the subject.[443]

Inevitably, these magnetic phenomena were also highly commercialised, advertised in Turin as a therapy for bourgeois ladies, '*Gabinetti Magnetici'*, in the local press. These adverts are stylised images of a treatment in which a specifically male magnetizer fixes a female reclining patient with his gaze, offering cures through hypnotism for the female patient of a range of illnesses.[444] Such services were already established by the 1860s, but their popularity waxed and waned, with particular prevalence evident around 1877 and 1900. Interestingly, a copy of one of the adverts is among the press cuttings in the Collezione Simeom in the Turin city archives, a collection formed by the Archivist and Librarian Vincenzo Armando (1858-1928) during his career in Turin, along with copies of playbills including the Donato performances and *Spiritismo* and repeated productions of *Mefistofele* in particular, again indicating that these themes struck a particularly strong chord with Turin's intellectual and cultural elite.[445] As I will show in the following section, both the cultural prevalence of images of the diabolical, and the interest in magnetism, could be read also from a number of operas in Turin theatres in this period.

[442] 'Pickman e Lombroso a Torino: ossia l'ipnotismo chiaroveggente', *La Civiltà Cattolica* (1890) pp. 285-311.
[443] ASCT, Collezione Simeom, 55, 3073, Teatro Alfieri - *Spiritismo* (V. Sardou), 29 maggio 1897.
[444] *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 1867 to 1900 passim; Gallini, *La Sonnambula Meravigliosa*, p. 140.
[445] ASCT, Collezione Simeom, Serie C, 3432, Advert for Gabinetto Magnetico, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 28 August 1903.

Fig. 28 'Gabinetto Magnetico' advert, ASCT, Collezione Simeom, C/56.

Turin's operatic thirst for the diabolical

As described earlier, the liberal position of the majority of Councillors in Turin in relation to Verdi's *La forza del destino* in 1873 was that, decorously done, there should be no bar to staging religious or specifically Catholic rites or symbols, particularly in works which had already been staged widely in the new Italian nation of 'A Free Church in a Free State'. The performance history of Meyerbeer's *Roberto Il Diavolo* in Turin illustrates some of these themes in adaptation and reception of grand opera in Italy, as it established a model for staging supernatural and religious elements which became a feature of the 'Mephistophelean' operas under consideration in this chapter. Indebted itself to Weber's *Der Freischütz*, as well as Goethe's *Faust*, interwoven with other traditions, *Robert Le Diable* is a potent combination, which itself was influential on composers from Verdi to Wagner. Its medieval Palermitan setting, and evocation of the classical and religious connection of Italian soil to the entrance to the underworld, might have had particular zest in Turin, as among the legends which contribute to Turin's reputation as a city of mysterious energies and the occult is the story that the access to the underworld is beneath the Fréjus monument in Piazza Statuto, the site of a classical Roman burial ground facing westward towards the setting sun in the alpine Fréjus valley.[446]

The narrative, also developed by Eugene Scribe, is based on the mediaeval legend and mystery play of Robert, Duke of Normandy. His mother, tired of praying to heaven for a child who has so far not arrived, is rewarded instead when she asks the Devil to help her. The child immediately displays evidence of its diabolical inheritance through violent and destructive behaviour. It was clearly a story that fascinated Arturo Graf, who detailed the legend at length in *Il Diavolo*, referring also to Meyerbeer's operatic version. Robert, in Graf's version of the legend, having cut the throats of nuns in a convent, thinks of his mother and goes to find her. For the first time in his life he is horrified by the effect of his own behaviour:

> for the first time he is aware of his own monstrous wickedness and is pierced to the heart by the sharp pain of remorse. But why is he so much more wicked

[446] On the occult symbolism and legends surrounding Piazza Statuto see Messori and Cazzulo, *Il Mistero di Torino*, pp. 216-216.

> than others? Why was he born this way? He is seized by a strong desire to uncover the mystery. He runs to his mother and at the point of his unsheathed sword demands that she reveal the secret of his birth. Understanding it, trembling and horrified, he is overcome by terror, disgust and pain. But his natural strength doesn't give way, or yield to despair. Indeed, the hope of a hard-won redemption, a miraculous victory, spurs him on and lifts his proud spirit. He thinks to defeat hell himself, and thwart the designs of the accursed demon who created him for his own ends, as a docile instrument of destruction and sin.[447]

From a scientific perspective in this period, the concept of the incubus and the succubus was central to the criminological theory of Scipio Sighele (1868-1913), disciple of Cesare Lombroso, whose book *La coppia criminale*, published in Turin in 1893, became hugely influential.[448] As Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg writes, Sighele's theories about the power relations within criminal couples in modern society was heavily gendered. In *Il Mondo Criminale Italiano*, Sieghele details cases of familial crime in which religious conversion effected states of brutal violence within families, through which one can read echoes of the theme of the birth of Robert of Normandy, in which the woman instigates her own corruption by the devil, as well as the myriad instances of diabolical compacts, which could stand as powerful cultural metaphors in Liberal Italy.[449]

In the opera, the corruption of Robert's mother is concealed for most of the opera in the un-opened testament she has left for him. The incubus, disguised in the opera as Bertram, is conflicted between his genuine love for his son, and Satan's instruction that he secure Robert's soul before midnight or lose him forever. Robert, whose character and behaviour is indelibly marked by the influence of his father, has been driven to Sicily in exile for his crimes. There he falls in love with Princess Isabella, but through Bertram's malevolent guidance continually loses his path through fighting and gambling. Robert's foster sister, Alice, makes her way to Sicily to try to protect Robert through conveying the testament of his mother, which he fails to read.

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[447] Graf, *Il Diavolo*, pp. 148-149.
[448] Scipio Sighele, *La coppia criminale: studio di psicologia morbosa* (Turin: Bocca, 1893).
[449] Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect*, pp. 73-87.

Bertram conjures up a rival for Isabella, the Prince of Granada, who wins her hand in a tournament, and then instructs Robert to steal a magic branch from the grave of St. Rosalie in a ruined monastery. There, the famous ballet of the ghostly nuns is set, who dance a bacchanal and attempt to seduce Robert. He plucks the branch, but later breaks it in front of Isabella who has prayed to heaven on her knees for him. In the final act, Alice and Bertram contest for Robert's soul in front of Palermo Cathedral. Bertram reveals his paternal identity to Robert and asks him to sign away his soul so they can remain together. Alice reveals that the magic has been broken, and Isabella is waiting for Robert at the altar. Robert belatedly reads his mother's warning of the man who seduced her. The midnight hour arrives, and Bertram is dragged back down to hell. The Cathedral doors open up to reveal Isabella at the altar where she and Robert are reunited.[450]

As Robert Letellier describes the religious context, "in the end the theology is quite orthodox: Robert is saved by grace. He has little to do with his own salvation, but allows himself to be guided by Alice's promptings."[451] Even the devil Bertram, Robert's father, is more a victim of his state of undeadness than the embodiment of evil, a reading which also suggests the legend of the Wandering Jew as much as *Faust*: "the burden of deathlessness, an ironic inversion of life everlasting, is related to damnation, and the fusion of the two becomes a mythological cipher for stricken existence, tragically thrown back on itself in unresolvable and inescapable contradictions."[452]

[450] Robert Letellier, *Meyerbeer's Robert Le Diable: the premier Opéra romantique* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012) pp.17-19.
[451] Ibid., p. 38.
[452] Ibid., p. 39.

Fig. 29 Figurino (Beltrame) by Filippo Peroni. La Scala (1870). Archivio Storico Casa Ricordi. ICON003645

Roberto had been premiered in Turin at the Teatro Carignano in 1846 and at the Teatro Regio in 1852, and revived there in 1858, as well as a production at the Teatro Nazionale in June 1857. In April 1863, a production at the Teatro Scribe was judged a woeful desecration of one of the most beautiful scores of modern times, perhaps confirming the fears of someone like Filippo Filippi that smaller Italian theatres, even somewhere as important as Turin, could not hope to resource successful productions of Meyerbeer.[453] A slew of Meyerbeer operas showed his popularity perhaps at its height between 1865 and 1870.

1865 Dinorah (Regio)
1866 L'africana (Vittorio Emanuele)
1866 Gli Ugonotti (Regio)
1868 Dinorah (Regio)
1868 L'africana (Regio)
1870 Gli Ugonotti (Regio)[454]

In the face of the dramaturgical and musical innovations of his later operas, *Roberto il Diavolo* was now judged as dated. Its final revival at the Teatro Regio in the nineteenth century came in the Carnival season of 1871-1872. By this time reaction to *Roberto* was at best ambivalent and sometimes dismissive. *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, which until his death in 1867, had been edited for much of the liberal period by Felice Romani, the poet and librettist to Bellini and Donizetti, was even more hostile, labelling *Roberto* as a transitional work within Meyerbeer's output and in the development of grand opera:

> a mixture of danceable rhythms and accents (music of real conviction) with expressions which are just strange, if beautiful in their own way, witchcraft, devilry etc. music of pure fantasy, without any heart or grandeur (in comparison to many many others) without any religious effect, or feeling of patriotism, or reminiscence or individuality, and to be serious it makes you laugh.[455]

[453] *L'Opinione*, 'Appendice Teatrale', 20 April 1863.
[454] Tedesco, *Opera a Macchina*, p. 46.
[455] Rassegna Musicale, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 31 December 1871, signed F.S. (See Appendix 1 Source 15)

The critic did pick out exceptions to his strictures – the tomb scene (with the cavorting nuns), Isabella's aria, and the finale trio he thought masterpieces. As a piece of theatre, he found it passable, but in terms of music, a regrettable backwards glance in in the face of the innovations of Verdi, Gounod and Wagner.[456] Another correspondent, to *L'Avvenire di Sardegna*, described the premiere as mediocre. Despite this tepid response, the production clearly steadied itself, with reports of greater success and acclaim particularly for the soprano and tenor and the run continued through January and February 1872.[457] The reaction of the critic of *La Gazzetta Piemontese* might in this context be a common aversion to a work now seen as juvenile. It wasn't the first time *Roberto* had received such criticism in Turin. The critic of *L'Opinione*, dismissed the 1858 production as the work of a juvenile "scribbler" ("scarabocchiatore") and as "nothing music" ("musicaccia").[458]

However, we can see a conclusion rather more revealing from *L'Opinione's* main critic, Francesco D'Arcais. His favourable view of Meyerbeer and *Roberto* was based on reviewing the 1865 production at the Pergola in Florence, but set it in the context of the performance history since its Italian premiere in the same theatre in 1841, and referencing recent Turin productions. The Italian premiere itself was received politely though without enthusiasm, but gradually the Florentine public warmed to it and for several seasons at the Pergola it became a fixture which attracted people from all over Tuscany. However, as D'Arcais continues, in his famously ironic tone, it had been bedevilled by mutilations by the grand ducal censors so as to make it unrecognisable:

> The Devil was no longer the Devil, but in the interests of religion, had been turned into a necromancer. What interest religion has in taking the defence of the devil, I couldn't say, unless the ducal censors were devotees of Beelzebub, which is not improbable.[459]

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[456] Rassegna Musicale, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 31 December 1871, signed F.S.
[457] *L'Avvenire di Sardegna*, 'Lettere di Torino', 4 and 9 January, 1872; *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, cronaca cittadina, 9 February, 1872.
[458] *L'Opinione*, 'Rivista Musicale', 9 January 1858. The production contributed to a disastrous season at the Regio which was commented on even in correspondence between Cavour and the piedmontese Foreign Minister, see Basso, *Il Teatro della Città*, p. 296.
[459] Francesco D'Arcais, Rassegna Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 23 October 1865.

This frequently rendered the text ludicrous or meaningless in performance, and totally undermined the ambiguous character of the anti-hero Beltrame. Even worse for D'Arcais the Act V duet for Beltrame and Roberto, accompanied by an offstage heavenly chorus, which the father and son interpret as God calling Roberto back, was cut. The censors had also insisted that during the run which straddled the Carnival and Lent periods of the season, the ballerinas' gowns be lengthened for Lenten performance. Furthermore the infamous Act III ballet of the nuns was sterilised in the libretto by changes to Beltrame's invocation, removing the religious references. D'Arcais praised the 1865 Pergola execution and its few cuts, made in good taste, particularly to shorten the introduction to duet in Act III which he thought excessively long "like the ballerinas' gowns were made in 1841". He also indulged in some mock praise for a pair of flying dragons introduced into the tomb scene in Act III:

> But what are Roberto, Beltrame, Rambaldo, Alice, Elena, Isabella, in comparison with the two flying dragons in the final scene of Act 3. I also like the devils who drag the ballerinas down to hell… but the dragons! Oh the dragons! My God the dragons! Here is the *non plus ultra* of all art. I know someone who goes every night just to see these dragons which emit flames from their mouths and eyes and do amazing leaps. Also in Turin at the Teatro Regio we have had dragons in *Roberto il Diavolo*, so perhaps a kind patron of the arts, for a long time director of the main stages in Turin, recently moved to Florence, is involved at the Pergola and brought them down.[460]

When we come to the Teatro Regio staging of 1871-2, however, D'Arcais' commentary on the Florence production and its link with recent Turin stagings, are helpful in assessing what impact changes to the performed version of *Roberto* might have had on its reception. Even if the cuts which D'Arcais so abhorred in the 1841 censored version had been reversed, significant alterations were still made, as can

[460] Ibid. (See Appendix 1 Source 16). As Arturo Graf points out in *Il Diavolo*, Satan appears as a dragon in the Book of the Apocalypse (12/3) though without intending to cause such mirth (Graf, *Il Diavolo*, p.70).

be seen in a surviving libretto of the Turin production.[461] The final scene, in which the Mephistophelean Beltrame is confounded through the distinctly Marian intercession of Alice, is altered to end the opera with Beltrame dragged down into hell, leaving Alice trying to revive Roberto.

> *The earth opens up, Beltrame disappears; Robert is lost, he faints and collapses at the feet of Alice, who tries to revive him. – CURTAIN*

The final chorus, as had been in 1841, was cut, in which the clouds clear to reveal the interior of Palermo cathedral and Princess Isabella, 'the ideal' (and here silent) woman, waiting at the altar for Roberto.

[461] "Si schiude il terreno, Beltrame sparisce; Roberto smarrito, perduto cade svenuto ai piedi di Alice, chi cerca richiamarlo in vita – FINE" ASCT, Collezione Simeom, Serie L, 314, *Roberto Il Diavolo*, libretto.

Fig. 30 *Roberto il Diavolo*, Act V/vi. Interno della Cattedrale di Palermo. La Scala (1870). Archivio Storico Casa Ricordi, ICON012263

Gone is the offstage chorus of angels beckoning Roberto to salvation with the words "Heaven is now open to him" in which it seems ambiguous whether the ending is a worldly or celestial union.[462] This ending avoids potential religious offence of the ecclesiastical setting, which despite the anticlerical reputation of the city, might have been a nod of discretion towards the devout among the audience. Alternatively it could be read as focussing the ending more clearly on the diabolical theme, Bertram's defeat and Robert's salvation through the intercession of Alice and his dead mother. Robert continues, of course, to be his father's son, and an alternative reading might be that his 'inherited' devilish traits would chime well with the intellectual elite of Turin in the 1870s, just as positivist ideas were becoming more influential.[463] Although *Roberto il Diavolo* did not return to the Turin stage after this production, its influence on later operas continued, as we will see from the reception of further operatic incarnations of the Devil, in which critics made a clear distinction between different models of Mefistofeles and Satan, which often looked back to Meyerbeer.

The wrong type of Devil in Gounod's *Faust*

Thus, the later reception of *Roberto il Diavolo* in Turin was coloured by the arrival of newer works. The most popular of these during the rest of the century was undoubtedly Gounod's *Faust*, which had first reached Turin at the Teatro Regio in January 1864. In the following decades it was played repeatedly across six of the city's theatres in at least nineteen different productions.

[462] "Ora a lui s'apre il ciel"

[463] As I will describe in chapter IV, this excision of the final scene did not go unnoticed elsewhere in Italy. Even the correspondent of the Venetian clerical newspaper *La Difesa* questioned why it was the practice in Italy to end the opera with the terzetto. *La Difesa*, 6-7 February 1890.

Fig. 31 Productions of *Faust* in Turin 1864-1915[464]

Theatre	**Date of opening**
Teatro Regio	5 January 1864
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	24 May 1865
Teatro Regio	4 February 1867
Teatro Regio	4 January 1870
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	21 October 1873
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	10 October 1877
Teatro Regio	31 December 1882
Teatro Balbo	11 June 1884
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	27 April 1886
Teatro Regio	13 March 1888
Teatro Regio	9 September 1888
Teatro Carignano	10 May 1890
Teatro Alfieri	4 May 1893
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	10 October 1894
Teatro Carignano	1 October 1899
Teatro Balbo	17 November 1900
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	31 December 1904
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	22 May 1907
Teatro Vittorio Emanuele	16 November 1912

As well as refocusing the action on the seduction, death and apotheosis of Marguerite, Gounod had to re-assess the portrayal of Mephistopheles in light of the existing model in *Robert le Diable*. If Meyerbeer created a lost soul condemned to his devilish incarnation, Gounod took another path. As Huebner recounts, Bertram was inevitably the template by which audiences would judge the portrayal of an operatic Devil. "On comes Faust, followed by his terrible Bertram", wrote the Parisian, Catholic, conservative critic Joseph d'Ortigue in 1859. Another, Albert de Lasalle, opined "the task [of creating Mephistopheles] must have been difficult after

[464] Giorgio Rampone, Le prime rappresentazioni e l'opera a Torino in Teatro Regio, *Faust Production Programme* (Turin: Teatro Regio, 2014) p. 86.

Meyerbeer's Bertram, who is the most successfully portrayed devil in all of music".[465] Gounod's characterisation of the devil has tones of Mozart's Don Giovanni as much as Meyerbeer. If Gounod moved the action of the Faust myth away from the metaphysical towards the lyrical scenes and amorous relationships, the religious battle between good and evil, pleasure and denial obviously also reflected a biographical imperative.[466] In his own mind, Gounod associated its composition with his introduction to Rome. As Steven Huebner has recounted, "during his first stay in Rome Gounod became intimately acquainted with Goethe's *Faust*. 'The work did not leave me; I carried it everywhere'. The Sistine Chapel, Ingres, Palestrina, *Faust* – Gounod swallowed the entire heady mixture."[467] A contrast between Mefistofeles's torment of Marguerite, with his temptation of Faust becomes central to the staging of angelic and demonic choruses and effects, and the persona of the 'satanic'. The Church scene in Act III/ii is thus dramatically and musically critical to the overall effect. Huebner characterises the scene thus:

> The church tableau, musically and visually one of the most striking scenes in the 19th century French canon… an organ prelude and liturgical chorus combine with Mefistofeles' imprecations to provide a sinister musical foil to Marguerite's attempts at prayer…[468]

It is well established that the composition and early performance history of *Faust* in France and elsewhere entailed many alteration and transpositions in the order of scenes – notably the position of the church scene relative to the death of Valentin. [469] In Paris this had been done both to limit the number of scene changes and at the whim of soprano, Caroline Miolan-Carvalho. Gounod himself was relaxed about this and considered alternatives including positioning the scene after Valentin's death, as in Goethe, but said that musically it made more sense to end Act IV with his murder.

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[465] Reviews of Faust, *Le Ménestrel*, 27 March 1859, *Le Monde illustré*, 27 Mar 1859, Quoted in Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 100.
[466] Andrea Malvano, 'Acqua santa nei bistro di Montmatre: il *Faust* bipolare di Gounod', *Faust, Production Programme,* p. 17.
[467] Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod,* p. 99.
[468] Ibid., p. 117.
[469] Ibid., pp. 126-7.

Placing the Church scene before Valentin's entrance with the soldier's was established as standard in French productions from 1869.[470]

This is the sequence to Act IV in the Turin premiere of 1864, for which the libretto survives in the archive of the Teatro Regio.[471] However, the libretto also reveals another scenic change, as the setting for the confrontation between Mefistofele and Margherita is no longer inside the Church, as in the French original, but "a Street, to the right the house of Margherita, to the left the church". A number of considerations might have led to this outdoor setting. It might have been easier and cheaper to use street scene rather than an elaborate church interior. We know from Viale Ferrero's account of scenography at the Teatro Regio that the dire financial state of the theatre meant that scenery, backdrops and machinery were shared between different operas, between *Faust* and *Macbeth* and between *Il Profeta* and *Don Carlos* during the 1860s, for example, as well as between theatres.[472] So one motivation might have been the availability of an existing street scene thus arranged. However, this is difficult to sustain when one sees that the setting remained in place through different Italian editions of the libretto and score into the twentieth century. It certainly renders some of the text illogical. Margherita tells Siebel in the previous scene that "the cruelties that I'm assailed by cannot close the temple of the Lord to me".[473] Praying outside the Church, as she does, as opposed to inside, implies that the doors have been closed to her, rather like a later ostracized operatic heroine, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

This adaptation also follows another practice established in the 1862 Paris revival of giving the solo bass part which objects to Margherita's attempts to prayer and summons the chorus of demons, usually sung by Mefistofeles, to another unnamed "Voice".[474] Another small change reinforces this sense of a process of making the

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[470] Ibid, p. 127.
[471] ASTRT, Fondo A Testa 490 *Faust, Dramma lirico in cinque atti Dei Signori Barbier e Carré.* Traduzione italiana del signor Achille de Lauzières. Musica del Maestro C. Gounod. Da rappresentarsi al Regio Teatro di Torino, Il Carnevale 1864 (Milan: Lucca).
[472] Ferrero, *La Scenografia*, pp. 417-420.
[473] "I crudi che m'oltraggiano/Chiuder non ponno a me/ Il tempio del Signor". Act IV, Scene II. *Faust, Dramma Lirico in Cinque Atti dei Signori J.Barbier e M. Carré. Traduzione Italiana di Achille De Lauzières. Musica di Carlo Gounod* (Milan: Ricordi, 1864)
[474] Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod*, p. 128.

ecclesiastical context less specific – the “Chorus of Priests and Boys” becomes a “Coro Religioso”. Cumulatively these alterations change the religious atmosphere of one of the dramatic focuses of the opera. The motivation for these changes is unclear from surviving contemporary sources, but may be the result of the inconsistency and caution among censors and theatre managers and publishers in the first years after Unification. As discussed in the Introduction above, and as will be seen the discussion of Rome in chapter V, concerns about offending ecclesiastical dignity still motivated changes to religious settings, processions and characters. When we come to the final scene of the opera, an even more blatant alteration occurs. Margherita's apotheosis is cut short, with the chorus of angels losing their Easter Hymn:

> She is saved!
> Christ is risen
> Christ comes again!
> Peace and joy to each who adores him!
> Christ comes again![475]

This is replaced with a single line from “una Voce” (presumably the heavenly inversion of the one in Act IV) who repudiates Mefistofeles’ gleeful “She’s damned!” (“dannata!”), with the original final line from Goethe’s *Faust Part I*, “No, she is redeemed!” (“No, redenta!”), leaving the Chorus to sing a rather more classical couplet: “The Heavens declare that/ God has pardoned her!”[476] What musical setting these lines received is not clear, but the focus of the spectacle clearly shifts, putting more weight on the diabolical scenes, rather than Margherita’s piety and salvation or Faust’s redemption.[477] These cuts also remain in the later libretto but the Easter hymn is restored in Italian editions of the score published in the twentieth century.

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[475] “È salva!/ Cristo risuscitò/ Cristo rinasce ancora!/ Pace e felicità a ciascun che l'adora!/ Cristo rinasce ancora!”
[476] “Il ciel si disserò/ Iddio le perdonò!” This ending returns the text closer to Goethe’s play.
[477] ASTRT, *Faust* Libretto (1864) Act IV Scene III. Curiously, uncertainty about the line “No, tu non dei pregar… Atteritela voi, O spiriti del mal”, continued, with one Italian vocal score re-ascribing the line to Mefistofele but keeping the line for ‘Una Voce’ in the printed libretto.

Despite Gounod's elevation in Italy to a status on a par with Verdi and Wagner, we find quite sharp complaints in the reception of *Faust* in Turin concerning the execution of key aspects of the opera, while admitting its importance among new works. The critic of *L'Opinione* dismissively said that you could count on the fingers of one hand, the original musical ideas in *Faust*. Of prime concern was the view that the music did not match the gravity of the story – "we are a long way from the profound pages of Goethe", though he also absolved Gounod of some blame by saying that it would be equally difficult to set to music Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[478] The orchestral concertato for the exorcism in Act II was highly praised as having "a truly religious character" and bearing evidence of Gounod's study of Wagner. But "his Mefistofeles is a copy of Meyerbeer's Beltrame and nothing of the scepticism and irony that Goethe passed down to us".[479] But in terms of the staging, the Church scene was singled out for criticism:

> It is disgraceful that in a theatre of the first level, such as the Regio, they don't have an organ suitable for such a large scene, and above that doesn't make the audience laugh in the most moving scenes with pathetic whistles and tremulous sounds like the instruments that imitate the song of canaries.[480]

He did however, rather tersely, praise the final trio, and "the chorus which ends the opera", which leaves some doubt about which version was actually performed.[481] Following Ferrero's evidence that the excised and altered parts of the bowdlerised version of *Guglielmo Tell* from 1840 had still not been reinstated decades later, we can assume that a similar lack of curiosity or other motivation to deviate from

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[478] Rassegna Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 11 January 1864.
[479] "Il suo Mefistofele è una copia del Beltramo di Meyerbeer, e non già quel tipo di scettticismo e di fine ironia che Goethe ci ha tramandato."
[480] "È poi vergognoso che in un teatro di prim'ordine, qual è il Regio, non s'abbia un organo adatto alla vastità della scena e sovratutto che non muova a riso il pubblico nelle situazioni più patetiche con certi suoni sfiatati e tremolanti, che ricordano gli strumenti che si adoperano per insegnare le canzoni ai canarini." The reference to the organ suggests the critic was concerned about the musical score, rather than the scenic suggestion of Church music 'offstage' now that the scene given is the street in front of the Church.
[481] Rassegna Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 11 January 1864.

established performance practice, and a published edition of the libretto, also persisted for other operas including *Faust*.[482]

A review of the next Turin production at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in 1865 drew favourable comparison overall with the Regio premiere, despite the thinner resources available to a theatre not of the first rank. Particularly noted was the performance of Mefistofele by Alessandro Bottero, ranked as "one of the greatest Mefistofeles you will see in an Italian theatre" despite him indulging in some hammy stereotypical devilish gestures.[483] Yet again, the Mefistofele of Gounod was found wanting in comparison with Goethe's. Doubts about the characterisation of Mefistofele persisted. When revived at the Regio in 1870, the critic of *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, while professing moderation between the fanatical devotees and detractors of *Faust*, focused again on a negative comparison with Goethe:

> To our mind above all, the part of Mefistofele is a mistake. Of the original and new, and completely modern devil of Goethe, nothing remains in the musical character of Gounod's Mefistofele. That of the French maestro is still the traditional devil of the stage: a Bertramo [sic] transposed to another setting, but which keeps the outline of his form, of this subtle genius of doubt, of this incarnation of scepticism, which arguably is expressed by the great German poet, nothing remains in our view. The artists who portray this character contribute to this false Mephistophelean characterisation, dressed like the devil of choreographed action and masked balls, red and black, two strong colours for example while the [Goethean] Mefistofeles was dressed in grey, an uncertain colour, you could say sceptical, but still *it is not the doubt of the philosophical devil which torments the modern intelligence, rather it is the affirmation of the Catholic demon*.[484] [Emphasis added]

[482] Mercedes Viale Ferrero, 'Guglielmo Tell a Torino 1839-1840', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 14 (1979) p. 392.
[483] Rassegna Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 29 May 1865.
[484] Cronaca Cittadina, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 5 January 1870. (See Appendix 1 Source 17).

A costume sketch from a 1903 production of *Faust* at La Scala conveys something of the type of demon being ridiculed here.

Fig. 32 Figurino, Mefistofele (Atillio Comelli) Teatro alla Scala (1903). Archivio Storico Casa Ricordi ICON003451

Apart from the persistent negative comparison with Goethe's poem, which motivated criticism of Gounod elsewhere, we also see here at the beginning of the 1870s the positivist interest in manifestations of the devil outside of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, as seen in the intellectual circles of Turin, the pages of *La Gazzetta Letteraria* and the work of Graf and others. Although Gounod's *Faust* inevitably remained hugely popular with audiences, critical reception of the staging of the supernatural and demonic was soon stimulated by the arrival of a new operatic version of the Faust myth.

Mefistofeles makes his mark in Turin

Boito's *Mefistofele* is the only direct adaptation of Goethe which attempts to recreate its epic scale including the Prologue in Heaven and the metaphysical journey of Part II, and these aspects seem more significant in the re-designation of the opera as *Mefistofele*, rather than a need to distinguish it from earlier adaptations.[485] Boito's obsession with dualism suffuses the whole opera, as it does many of his other libretti like *Otello* and *Ero e Leandro*. As Boito writes in his note at the beginning of the score, “As the struggle of dualism unfolds we should follow it to the death of Faust, which is the core of the wager” [486] He also alludes to the Greek etymology of Mefistofele being 'enemy of light', thus employing an opposing interpretation of Mefistofeles’ satanic purpose from the one implied by the masonic, classical persona of Lucifer as the bringer of light, sometimes associated with scientific progress as we saw earlier. The Prologue in Heaven gives Mefistofele greater scope than in other Faust adaptations to establish his ambivalent character and relation to Man. This relationship with Faust is much more closely drawn, with mimicry of Faust's own speech, contrasted in the Epilogue with an actual whistle which accompanies his downfall as Faust’s soul is redeemed. Whereas Mefistofele is given a more sympathetic characterisation by Boito, Faust becomes more of a cipher for the battle between God and the Devil (as Boito describes it in his note), and his conventional religiosity restored at the end of the opera reduces the significance of Margherita's agency in his redemption compared to Gounod's version. One detail which emerges about the characterisation of Mefistofele from the production handbook (*disposizione scenica*) is that his costume seems to have fitted better the image of Goethe’s Mefistofeles which we saw reflected in the poor reception of Gounod’s version. In Boito’s opera he is dressed as the grey friar in Act I when he encounters Faust in Act I/ii. For Acts II and III he is given a variety of elaborate red and black clothing and

[485] Bacon, Henry, 'The Faust Theme in Romantic Music', in Fitzsimmons, Lorna (ed.), *Lives of Faust: The Faust theme in Literature and Music* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) pp.212-213; Termini, Olga, 'Language and Meaning in the Prologue in Heaven: Goethe's Faust and Boito's Mefistofele' in Cole, Malcolm and Koegel, John (eds.), *Music in Performance and Society* (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1997) pp. 355-379.
[486] “Perchè la lotta del dualismo si compia conviene seguirla fino alla morte di Faust, che è l'anima della scommessa.”

accessories, while the Prologue in Heaven and Epilogue he is clothed fully in black.[487]

Alessandra Campana, in her illuminating analysis of the production book, highlights the importance of character definition which it places on Mefistofele in particular, and the detailed description of magic effects and tricks, which again resonates with the contemporary Turin interest in illusion, hypnotism and the supernatural.[488] Certainly the critics in Turin responded enthusiastically to the shape-shifting characterisation of Mefistofele, echoing the debates in *La Gazzetta Letteraria* between Graf and Bersezio about different personifications of the Devil. The critic Ippolito Valetta was an aristocratic associate of Giuseppe Depanis, who managed the Teatro Regio between 1876 and 1881. He also helped establish the *Rivista Musicale Italiana* in Turin, writing over four editions about the premiere, enthusiastically quotes Martino Roeder, the composer and editor of Ricordi's *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*:

> Mefistofele is the doubt which leads to science, and the evil which leads to goodness.[489]

His interest in the intellectual and literary antecedents and inspirations for Mefistofele from antiquity onwards demonstrate the greater sympathy Boito's creation had established in Italy from its second version, premiered in Bologna in 1875, though even here Valletta regrets the lost first version. The effect of the Epilogue clearly overwhelmed Valetta, who summarised the final confrontation between good and evil for his readers thus:

> Mefistofele waits in the doorway for the soul [of Faust], summoning his sirens. Against the genius of evil Faust defends himself with his Bible: the celestial vision appears and becomes more and more breathtaking: basking in this light Faust dies while a shower of light and flowers puts Satan to flight….

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[487] Disposizione Scenica per l'opera *Mefistofele*. Fascicoli 1,2,3. Compilata e regolata secondo le istruzioni dell'Autore da Giulio Ricordi (1877) ASCR, ICON013641, p.83.
[488] Campana, *Opera and Modern Spectatorship*, p.27.
[489] "Mefistofele è il dubbio che genera la scienza, è il male che genera il bene." Ippolito Valetta, 'Rivista Musicale: Mefistofele', *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 26 December, 1876, pp. 2-3.

> The point of climax of the epilogue comes with this splendid chorus of the celestial throng which we have heard in the prelude [as well as during Margherita's apotheosis in Act III]: the effect builds with Faust's excitement and the anger of Mefistofele, and it is after a scene of this nature that you understand the power of art and how you bless the artist who reveals beauty with such miraculous spirit.[490]

Although we get much more sense of the staging from this description, again there is only cursory direct response to it:

> The staging was well done, some of Ferri's work excellent: the sets and the costumes more than satisfactory, notwithstanding the usual quibbles.[491]

It is not entirely clearly what "the usual quibbles" were. His description fits with the complex technical effects demanded of the scene as with the Prologue, which I discussed through the instructions in the production book in chapter II. The image below gives some sense of how the celestial throng might have appeared through the required 'siparietto'. Perhaps here again the musical forces were inadequate as we saw in Genoa, or the set lacked a back cloth to push the sound forwards.

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[490] Ippolito Valleta, Rivista Musicale, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 3 January 1876. (See Appendix 1, Source 18)

[491] "Buone le scene, alcune del Ferri eccellenti; l'allestimento scenico ed il vestario, in complesso, più che conveniente, non ostante le querimonie di qualche incontentabile che non manca mai." Ippolito Valleta, Rivista Musicale, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 3 January 1876.

Fig. 33 *Mefistofele*, Bozzetto, Siparietto per l'Epilogo (Carlo Ferrario) Teatro alla Scala (1881). Archivio Storico Casa Ricordi, ICON004313.[492]

[492] 'Siparietto', literally 'little curtain', probably signifies the backdrop which is indicated in the production handbook for the celestial vision which is revealed as Faust's soul is redeemed. Disposizione Scenica, ASCR, pp.72-78.

Boito's *Mefistofele* clearly managed to animate the Turin critics artistically, intellectually, and perhaps chauvinistically in a way which Gounod's French adaptation of the revered German poet never could. Yet although *Mefistofele* would continue to be revived in Turin regularly until the First World War, Gounod's version remained better box-office. However, the final example of these 'devilish' supernatural operas, Alberto Franchetti's *Asrael* pushed some of the associations between the supernatural, the mythical and the representation on stage of the celestial and infernal in new directions, which had clear parallels with the magnetising performances running concurrently in Turin theatres and consulting rooms.

Magnetising Devils and Angels

Asrael's literary and musical influences were highly eclectic. In the libretto by Ferdinando Fontana Asrael and Nefta are angelic lovers in heaven. Taken directly from a contemporary version of Flemish folk-stories by Samuel-Henri Berthoud, the atmosphere is also very like Thomas Moore's *Lives of the Angels* which had been translated in Italian by Maffei.[493] More broadly the opera draws on *Mefistofele*, Goethe's *Faust* and *Lohengrin*. Asrael is cast into hell with Lucifer, but Lucifer permits Asrael to leave hell for a year to find Nefta, while Nefta descends from heaven to protect Asrael.[494] The middle of the opera takes place in Brabant, and reveals Fontana's debt to *Lohengrin* as much as the Faust myth. Asrael is tempted through an amorous dalliance with the gypsy queen Loretta and a battle with the evil Princess Lidoria, while Nefta, in disguise as a nun, Sister Clotilde, and imprisoned in a convent, and is released only through Asrael's praying for salvation in a manner similar to Faust and Robert. In a sense he is the fusion of Mefistofeles with Faust, coloured by Lohengrin and Tannhäuser, a devil who is redeemed and transfigured.

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[493] Samuel-Henry Berthoud, *Légends et traditions surnaturelles des Flandres* (Paris: Garnier, 1862 pp. 67-187; Emanuele D'Angelo, *Leggendo libretti: da Lucia di Lammermoor a Turandot* (Rome: Aracne, 2013) p. 174.

[494] Francesco Cesari has compared this narrative to Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore*, which was extremely popular in Italy following its premiere in Turin in 1878. Francesco Cesari, 'Ferdinando Fontana librettista' in Johannes Streicher, Sonia Teramo e Roberta Travaglini (eds.), *Scapigliatura & Fin de siècle: libretti d'opera italiani dall'Unità al primo Novecento: scritti per Mario Morini* (Rome: ISMEZ, 2004) p. 330.

The local premiere of *Asrael* in December 1890 could be said to be have been rather tardy. Despite being born in Turin, for reasons unclear Franchetti's first opera only reached the Teatro Regio after productions in Reggio Emilia, followed by Bologna, Milan, Genoa and Florence. Critics and musicologists have not been kind to its musical and dramatic originality or legacy. Julian Budden's damning verdict was that Franchetti paraded his German lessons, and made a self-conscious display of schoolroom technique.[495] Indeed it was not an enduring work, even compared to Franchetti's two historical epic works which followed, *Cristoforo Colombo* (for which Franchetti was apparently recommended by Verdi on the basis of his having heard *Asrael*) and *Germania*.[496] Franchetti, famously from a hugely wealthy noble Jewish family, felt moved to publicly deny rumours in the press that he or his father had paid the impresario Piontelli to produce *Asrael*.[497] However, its initial reception was largely positive, and Toscanini conducted it at La Scala to great acclaim as late as 1903.[498] The opera's reception in Turin highlights both the earlier models of the personification of the infernal and celestial alongside some of the contemporary ideas about magic, illusion and suggestion which animated both theatre audiences and the cultural and scientific elite.

The indebtedness of Fontana's libretto for *Asrael* to Boito's poetry, and *Mefistofele* in particular, has been analysed by Emanuele D'Angelo.[499] As well as criticizing the dramatic quality of Fontana's verse in comparison to Boito's, he concurs with Guarnieri Corazzol that *Asrael* is on a grand scale dramaturgically, but that ideas really recall Boito's *Mefistofele*.[500] The opening scenes in Heaven and Hell certainly recall Boito's interpretation of Goethe's *Faust*. Other Boitean touches are the finale, with cherub trumpeters, saints and angels singing "Allelujate, o tromba!", and the preceding scene where the walls of the convent collapse to reveal the stairway to

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[495] Julian Budden, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi, vol.3* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) p. 278.
[496] Richard Erkens, 'Cyclical Forms in Musical Dramaturgy' in Giorgi e Richard Erkens (a cura), *Alberto Franchetti,* p. 78.
[497] *La Gazzetta di Treviso*, 22 June 1890.
[498] Teatro alla Scala, Toscanini e La Scala (Milano: Edizioni della Scala, 1972) p. 112.
[499] Emanuele D'Angelo, 'Alla scuola di Boito: L'Asrael di Ferdinando Fontana' in *Alberto Franchetti*, pp. 54-76.
[500] Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, Scrittori-librettisti e librettisti-scrittori, in EAD., *Musica e letteratura in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milano: Sansoni, 2000) p. 31, quoted in D'Angelo 'Alla scuola di Boito', p. 71.

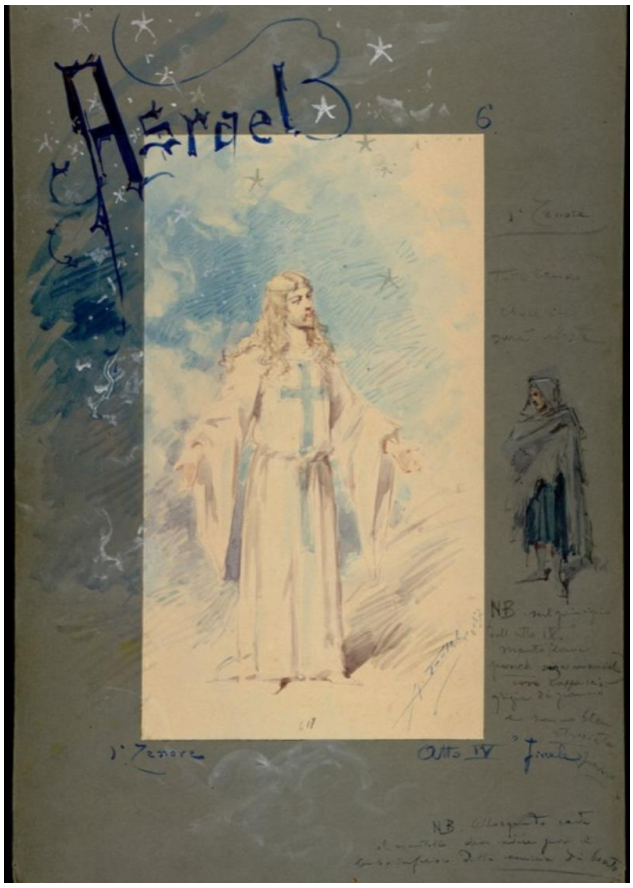
heaven from Act I.ii, which now becomes the apotheosis for Asrael and Nefta.[501] D'Angelo suggests that this could be drawn from Boito's libretto for *Ero e Leandro* in which the walls collapse and through the fissure can be seen the glorification of the protagonists. He also points out the incongruity of transferring this action from a classical setting to a Christian religious one in which the hand of God is seen to bring down the walls of a convent full of nuns, though sadly this destruction is not reflected in any of the available reviews of the Turin production.[502] D'Angelo and Corazzol criticize Fontana's dramaturgy and symbolism in a number of areas including the scenes most reminiscent of *Mefistofele*, particularly Act 1 in Hell and Heaven, and Nefta's incarnation as a nun in love with a fallen angel released from Hell. As was discussed in chapter I, Franchetti was drawn to similar themes elsewhere, such as *Maria Egiziaca* and *Cristoforo Colombo.* One of the most remarkable aspects of the mystical conception of the opera and its hero, can be traced through the costumes envisaged for *Asrael* in surviving sketches from the Reggio Emilia *prima assoluta*. Asrael is treated to a distinct costume for each Act through which one can trace the evolution of his character from Fallen Angel in Hell with Lucifer, through mediaeval knight in Brabant, to a transfigured angel. He literally sheds, scene by scene, the scarlet hue of his devilish persona and assumes the spotless, blinding white aura of Christ himself.

[501] Ibid., p. 72.
[502] Ibid., pp. 72-74.

Fig. 34 *Asrael* (1888), Figurini, Act I/i (Giuseppe Palanti) ICON009303; Act I/iii (Alfredo Edel) ASCR, ICON010178

Fig. 35 Asrael (1888), Figurini, Act II ASCR, ICON010179; Act III ICON010180

Fig. 36 *Asrael* (1888), Figurino, Act IV (Alfredo Edel) ASCR, ICON010181



Giuseppe Depanis, in a detailed account in *La Gazzetta Letteraria* following the premiere in December 1890, summarised its theme as:

> a new variation on the theme of redemption through love, this theme for which Faust and Tannhäuser are saved.[503]

Depanis, despite being closely linked to the Regio, is remarkably objective about the strengths and weaknesses of the libretto, the score and the staging. As he concludes, the ultimate question is perhaps the ineffability of the religious or supernatural illusions which the librettist and composer are seeking after, if not entirely successfully.

> The struggle between the angels and demons is conceived and realised with serious intentions. But the musical beauties of this finale would be better appreciated if the demons and angels didn't appear on stage.[504]

[503] "una nuova variazione sul tema di redenzione per l'amore, quel tema per cui Faust e Tannhäuser sono salvi."
[504] "La lotta tra gli angeli ed I demoni è concepita e svolta con grandiosità di intendimenti. Ma le bellezze musicali di questo finale sarebbero meglio apprezzate se I demoni e gli angeli non apparissero sulla scena.". Giuseppe Depanis, 'Asrael di Franchetti', *La Gazzetta Letteraria*, 10 January 1891.

Fig. 37 *Asrael* (1888). Bozzetto, Act I/i Nell'inferno. 'Una vasta grotta illuminata da foschi bagliori'. (Augusto Ferri), ASCR, ICON004213

This was unfortunate because musically, these celestial scenes were considered some of the finest in the score. This judgement of the appropriateness, feasibility even, of representing scenically the celestial or supernatural, as opposed to being conveyed through the musical score, or implied as off-stage, is one that rings through much of the critical reception of *Asrael* as with previous examples. If Depanis was deliberately even handed in his published analysis of *Asrael* the reception in the Turin press was more enthusiastic, if also seized with doubts and questions about the unity of musical ideas and Franchetti's working through of his Wagnerian influences through "an Italian brain". *La Gazzetta del Popolo's* critic judged it a work "organic and vital". He betrayed no sense of incongruity in the portrayal of angels and demons in human form or in the heavenly and infernal scenes. The performance of the tenor Michele Mariacher, only twenty-six at the time, was complimented as having "acted very soberly rendering extremely well the mystical character of Asrael".[505] In a brief, if at least specific paragraph referencing the staging, he listed the scenes which received the warmest applause including, "the stunning scene in paradise, that scenically is one of the finest things imaginable".[506] His own conclusion on the scenes in heaven and hell was more sceptical, but far from damning:

> We believe that few people will grasp immediately the vast scope with which Franchetti, in the first act, wishes to characterise the scenes in in Paradise and in hell, nevertheless we feel that, apart from the natural challenges which these bring, the vertiginous pace of the music in the scene in hell was just as we would expect in Hell, done exquisitely, with grand and powerful triumphant brass, and in the same way that the calm, tranquil, seraphic, almost ecstatic idea of Paradise, done perfectly on the harps and organ which are prevalent in the scene in Paradise. Here the music, the instrumentation, the use of the

[505] "Bellissima voce, vibrante, bene educata, estesa e simpatica, è quella del tenore, Michele Mariacher, con un azione molto sobria rese benissimo il personaggio mistico di Asrael." Sacco Nero, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 28 December 1890.
[506] "i primi applausi scoppiano… alla stupenda scena del paradiso che, scenograficamente è una delle cose più fini immaginabili." Sacco Nero, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 28 December 1890.

> chorus, the scenography, at a glance, everything contributes to rendering the illusion perfectly.[507]

His review of the second performance noted the warm applause given to the set designer for the scene in Paradise.[508]

[507] Sacco Nero, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 28 December 1890.
[508] "…gli applausi furono frequenti e calorosi. Notiamo fra questi la chiamata fatta al scenografo per la scena in Paradiso." Notizie Teatrali, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 29 December 1890.

Fig. 38 *Asrael* (1888), Bozzetto, Act I/iii. 'In cielo. Anfiteatro di nubi tagliato da una scala d'oro.' (Augusto Ferri), ASCR, ICON004214

La Gazzetta Piemontese treated the premiere to coverage reserved for important new works, with a lengthy synopsis published on the day of the performance, followed by a three-column review by E. Ferrettini the following day.[509] Here we find a not dissimilar mixture of approbation for the courageous ideas of a youthful work, alongside reservations about its musical structure and dramatic pacing. He was complimentary about his fusion of German style in the Wagnerian and Goldmarkian influences, with Italian taste:

> The best German music today is that written in Italy, said one illustrious critic, and he wasn't wrong. Franchetti, a natural rather than vulgar artist, feels the importance of Wagnerian opera, but realises where it's incompatible with our sense of feeling, our climate, our musical education.[510]

Finally, it is worth looking in more detail at one of the dramatic climaxes of the supernatural elements of the dramaturgy of *Asrael*, which has a striking echo for the cultural milieu of Turin in this period. The scene (Act II.vi) involves Princess Lidoria, the daughter of the King of Brabant, who has been inducted into the magic arts and acquired the power to compel obedience through staring. Asrael appears at the court and challenges her. The stage directions in the score show an uncanny resemblance to another Turin stage performance we have already witnessed.

> *Lidoria descends from the pavilion and takes up position ten steps away from Asrael. She stares at Asrael and seems agitated. Asrael and Lidoria begin to stare at each other.*
> *Lidoria tries in vain to resist the eyes of Asrael. She is won.*
> *Lidoria, trembling and pale*…[511]

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[509] Asrael: Il Libretto, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 27 December 1890.
[510] Asrael di A Franchetti al Teatro Regio, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 28 December 1890.
[511] "*Lidoria scende dal padiglione e va a collocarsi a un dieci passi di fronte ad Asrael. Lidoria fissa Asrael e pare agitata. Asrael e Lidoria cominciano a fissarsi. Lidoria tenta invano di resistere allo sguardo di Asrael. Essa è vinta. Lidoria, tremante e pallida*…". Franchetti, Alberto, *Asrael: leggenda in quattro atti di Ferdinando Fontana* (Milan: Ricordi, 1888) Act II.vi.

So Lidoria is won, a male demon trumps a female witch. She is physically drained by the effort, and is then spurned by Asrael for her pains, who holds fast to his love for Nefta. This confrontation between Lidoria and Asrael, involving a penetrating stare imposing its supernatural power by a man over a woman, suggests Franchetti or Fontana might have had contemporary hypnotism in mind, perhaps even from attending one of the performances at the Teatro Scribe in Turin by Donato in 1886, Pickman only months before the production in 1890, or had consulted one of the clinical magnetisers practising commercially in the city.[512]

[512] A further example which draws together the influence of Lombrosian theories, the interest in the paranormal and opera in Turin has been traced by Jane Sylvester in Puccini's *Le Villi*, where the depiction of the "spectral" body in the orchestral interlude 'L'Abbandono' carries echoes of "mediumistic performance and phantom trick-photography". I am grateful to Jane for sharing her unpublished conference paper with me. Jane Sylvester, 'Puccini's Material Girls: Tensions of the Spiritualist Body in *Le Villi*', unpublished paper given at Tosc@ Paris, June 2019) p. 3.

Fig. 39 Advert, Gabinetto Magnetico, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 1 January 1871

This use of magical powers to explore the subconscious is given a further twist in Act III.vi. In revenge for her humiliation, Lidoria bestows powers on the gypsy queen Loretta (who is also in love with Asrael) to put the hero to sleep with a kiss, in which state he will reveal the true name of his beloved. Asrael indeed reveals the name of his beloved, "Nefta!".[513] The subterfuge involved might offer a further point of reference for the contemporary polemics against hypnotic stage performances by scientists and the Church for the moral and psychological dangers it posed.

As mentioned above, the opera concludes in the convent where Nefta and Asrael are united through his willingness to pray to heaven for redemption. The walls of the convent collapse and the stairway to heaven from Act I/ii is revealed. At the top of the staircase are four cherubim blowing trumpets of silver. The heavenly choir sings to the Virgin Mary and saints. A statue and altar to the Virgin are bathed in light. Asrael witnesses Suor Clotilde transformed back into his beloved Nefta as he sings:

> Great Lord! Great Lord!
> Before my eyes what magical enchantment!
> Divine vision![514]

Franchetti's *Asrael* boasted an impressive run of seventeen performances on its opening at the Teatro Regio, yet it was to be its only appearance on the theatre's programme. In retrospect, it was perhaps unlucky to have appeared the same season as Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, despite the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*'s attempt to promote its challenging orchestration and dramatisation of difficult themes, against Cavalleria's more obvious charms.[515] However, its combination of the Mephistophelean, which so intrigued the positivists of Turin, with

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[513] For a musical analysis of this scene which highlights the reuse of material from the heavenly scene in Act I, see Erkens, *Alberto Franchetti*, pp. 101-111. Cesari compares this scene to Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalilah*, although this was not premiered in Italy until 1892 it is possible Franchetti encountered it since its successful German premiere in 1878. Cesari, 'Ferdinando Fontana', p. 330.

[514] "Gran Dio! Gran Dio! Agli occhi miei qual mai si compie arcano incanto! Sogno divin!" Franchetti, *Asrael*, Act IV, parta seconda.

[515] *La Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 25 January 1891, quoted in Basso, *Il Teatro della Città*, p. 445.

a conventionally Catholic ending of redemption, clearly appealed to a broad audience in the city.

Graf's Devil and his temptation of Christ

These movements generated a further echo in a one-act opera premiered at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuel in October 1902, which also connects the *torinese* interest in the diabolical with the drift of its positivist thinkers towards spiritualist and religious enquiry and belief. This '*mistero lirico'*, *La Tentazione di Gesù*, was composed by the Turin-born Carlo Cordara (1866-1930) to a libretto taken from the poem by Arturo Graf, which had been published in *Nuova Antologia*, and subsequently in a collection entitled *Poemetti Drammatici*.[516] The poem and libretto dramatise the new testament story of the three temptations by Satan in the wilderness, transforming them into a series of exotic visions worthy of any of the Faust adaptations. Satan is characterised very much in the philosophical mould of the cynical, sarcastic Mefistofeles of Boito (when he tells Christ "you are difficult to please"), while indulging in the exotic pleasures of Gounod's version.[517] As mentioned in chapter I, the adaptation of Graf's poem involved extending the text by adding a version of the Lord's Prayer as text for a concluding aria for Christ after Satan's dismissal, followed by a heavenly chorus of angels. It is not clear from surviving sources where the motivation for this extension came, or whether Graf himself was involved in the adaptation, though we must assume that he approved the text as he attended the premiere at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele on 14 October 1902.[518]

The scriptural temptations are based around of stones into bread, riches in return for worshipping Satan, and casting himself down to be rescued by God. Graf's text gives

[516] Arturo Graf, 'La tentazione di Gesú', *Nuova Antologia* 1901 April; *Poemetti Drammatici* (Milan: Treves, 1905). This collection brought together a series of poems published in Nuova Antologia including 'Mefistofele', 'La Resurrezione di Lazzaro' and 'La dannazione di Don Giovanni'.
[517] "Difficile sei di contentar!" *La Tentazione di Gesù: mistero lirico in un atto di Arturo Graf Musica di Carlo Cordara Teatro Vittorio Emanuele di Torino Ottobre 1902* (Milano: Ramperti) p. 11.
[518] According to the review of the first performance, Graf remained in his seat during the applause and received his own approbation seated, rather than joining Cordara and the artists on stage for their seven curtain calls.

them as “the temptation of love”, “the temptation of riches” and “the temptation of power”. The most ‘operatic’ and extreme of these changes is the temptation of love, in which Satan addresses Christ with the words:

> You are young and beautiful
> The shy virgin sometimes dallies in your dreams
> Love is the test, Why not try it?
> Delicious fruit is that of woman!
> And satisfies every desire! Behold![519]

Satan summons up a vision of beautiful female dancers crowned with flowers.[520] Have resisted this vision and the further two temptations of material riches and earthy dominion, Satan shows Christ a vision of Calvary and predicts he will call on him from there. Dismissed a final time, Christ’s arioso solo recites a version of the Lord’s Prayer (which compresses the sixth and seventh petitions against temptation and evil as “keep us from evil and the tests laid by the Enemy”), before the heavenly chorus strikes up with “Osanna!”, “Gloria a Dio!” and “peace to men on earth!”.[521] Strikingly, the cover illustration of a rare, surviving copy of the piano/vocal score of *La Tentazione di Gesú* shows a bearded Jesus in profile looking towards a dream-like vision of Jerusalem and Calvary beyond bordered with exotic and highly suggestive flowers, reminiscent of the bozzetto for the Epilogue of Mefistofele and the angelic incarnation of Franchetti’s Asrael.[522]

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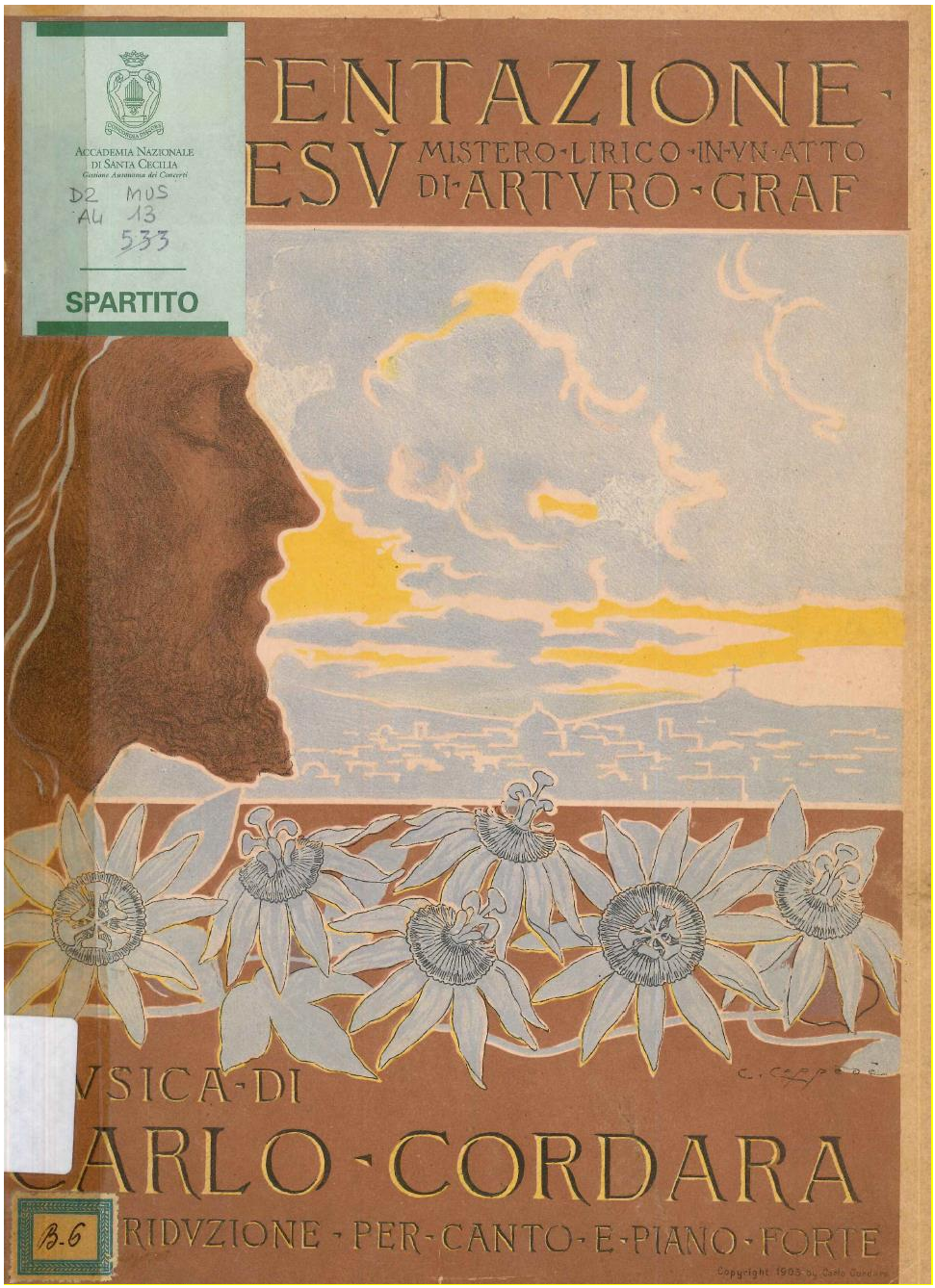
[519] “Giovine sei, d'eletta forma e quale/ La timidetta vergine talora/ Vagheggia in sogno. Dell'amore il saggio/ Perchè non fai? Delizioso frutto/ Quel della donna! Ed ogni voglia appaga. Mira!” Libretto, pp. 9-10.

[520] As highlighted in chapter I, this vision in Graf’s poem described them as “naked or scantily-clad” dancers (ignude e mezzo discinte”), but clearly this was either impractical on stage or felt too risqué even for a Turin audience, where they became merely beautiful women crowned with flowers (“bellissime donne coronate di fiori”).

[521] “guardarci dal male e dalle tese/ Reti dell’inimico”, libretto, p.16.

[522] Carlo Cordara, *La tentazione di Gesù: mistero lirico in un atto di Arturo Graf. Riduzione per Canto e pianoforte* (Firenze: Mignani, 1903). This copy is in the library of the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome. It is also worth noting that 1902 was also the year of the Prima Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte Moderna in Turin, when art nouveau (*stile liberty* or *stilo nuovo*) was first introduced to Italy on a large scale, in the city where it would have a particular impact. See Richard A Etlin, ‘The Search for a Modern Italian Architecture’, *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* vol. 13 Stile Floreale theme issue (Summer 1989) pp. 94-109.

Fig. 40 Frontespiece, *La Tentazione di Gesù*, Carlo Cordara (1902). Biblioteca dell'Accademia Santa Cecilia, Rome. AS Spart.533



The opera was performed twelve times between 14 October and 25 November at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele. A preview in *La Gazzetta Plemontese* on the day of the premiere (initialled l.a.v.) praised the richness of colours already enjoyed in Graf's poem, saying that while respecting tradition (presumably religious) he had invested the tricky part of Satan with such dramatic interest that it obscured thoughts of everyday troubles – essential if a stage work is not to fail. He looked forward to Cordara's setting as a breath of true idealism amidst the baseness of commercialism.[523]

The following day the same correspondent reported a thunderous success for Cordara and Graf.[524] In the role of Cristo, the tenor Franco Mannucci had given, he concluded, what would be the model for future interpretations of his "Biblical character". As Satana, the twenty-three-year-old baritone Taurino Parvis, conveyed the dark passion of Satan with a voice that was beautiful, powerful and secure.[525] He was particularly moved by the heavenly theme which opened and concluded the work, sung by the heavenly choir off-stage. Sadly, there is no visual description or surviving material for the sets and costumes by the eminent Caramba (pseudonym of Luigi Sapelli) and Ugo Gheduzzi which were highly praised. The impresario, Cesari, was praised for overcoming the inevitable risks of the production, presumably not just its novelty but its dramatic treatment of the new testament subject. Overall the impression from the review is of an adventurous modern work, respectful of its religious content, yet in an idealist form which clearly spoke to a wider audience among the Turin intellectual and cultural elite.[526] Certainly, for the positivist poet Graf who had only two decades earlier declared the Devil redundant in the modern world, Christ, conventional religion and a heavenly choir are truly given the last word.

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[523] 'Arti e Scienze: La tentazione di Gesù', *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 14 October, 1902; 17, 25 November, 1902.
[524] Rather incongruously, except perhaps as a rather harsh lesson in the temptation of love, Cordara's 'mistero lirico' was preceded by the first two acts of Donizetti's *La Favorita* (1840) in which Fernand leaves the safety of the Monastery at Compostela to pursue the woman he loves who turns out to be the mistress of the King. It is not clear with what other works later performances of Cordara's opera was paired.
[525] Taurino Parvis (1879-1957) was also from Turin. Among his many major roles in the city was also Mefistofele in Berlioz' *La Dannazione di Faust, and* the baritone role of Giuda (Judas) in Giannetti's opera of *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* in 1907.
[526] 'Arti e Scienze: La Tentazione di Gesù', *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 15 October 1902.

Conclusion

This atmosphere of 'magical enchantment', ('l'arcano incanto'), the diabolical and supernatural, had already worked its spell on two generations of opera audiences in Turin, fascinated by both scientific possibilities they promised for rational explanation, and their reading along either conventional Catholic lines or the more unorthodox spiritualist interests of the end of the century. Despite audiences gradually tiring of repeated Fausts and Mefistofeles, all these works seem to speak clearly to this post-Unification atmosphere and the desire to have this represented on the stage, despite, or perhaps as a result of the wider religious context in the new Italian state. The intellectual debate about the musical and dramatic representation of the devil was less about the theological existence of the personification of evil, but about an orthodox versus a rationalist, philosophical understanding of the duality between good and evil, hence poor critical reception of characterisations of the devil which were considered two-dimensional or clichéd. Although a small minority of Catholics among the elite in Turin balked at offences against ecclesiastical dignity on stage, very soon, any suggestion of censorship was superseded by a greater thirst for exploration of the themes which were being widely discussed in other cultural and intellectual forums. What we can establish is that in the *città del diavolo*, both mainstream Catholic audiences, and the anticlerical intellectual elite responded enthusiastically to the Mephistophelean themes in these operas which formed such an important part of the operatic repertoire, and a part of the wider cultural and social interest in supernatural phenomena, spiritualism and magnetism.

Chapter IV – Religion and Opera in the Venetian Culture War

> Are you really contemplating Venice? I fear that would be an unlucky notion; for of all the Italian cities Venice is certainly the least progressive; yet I myself should not advise you to try any of the others.[527]

Introduction

In April 1914 Teatro La Fenice joined the growing list of opera houses around the world to give a staged production of Wagner's *Parsifal* following the expiry of the thirty year Bayreuth prohibition on 31 December 1913. It was only the seventh Italian city to take advantage of this, following Bologna and Rome on 1 January, Milan later that month, and Pisa and Turin in March. Billed as a *dramma mistico* in Venice, or *dramma sacro* elsewhere, rather than 'stage-consecration festival play', *Il Gazzettino* reported the landmark event with a certain ironic view of the religious aspects of the staging:

> a low murmur spread through the theatre, but one of admiration… while the sacred rite unfolded with a solemnity enough to shame those at the Sistine Chapel, a sense of pity however filled the heart of the public at the sight of the *povero cristo* of Parsifal, obliged to stay stock still, and worse, without understanding anything of what was happening before him.[528]

This might have confirmed Wagner's own prejudices against the cultural tastes of the people in whose city he died, as he wrote in the quotation above, just days before his death, in his final letter to Angelo Neumann, who was negotiating the first international tour of the complete Ring tetralogy in the original German.
Objections to Wagner in Italy in 1914 were as likely to come from futurists and modernists as from Italian musical conservatives or Catholics as in previous generations, but after a slow start with the anachronistic choice of *Rienzi* in 1874,

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[527] Quoted in John W. Barker, *Wagner and Venice* (Rochester: URP,2008) p. 182.
[528] *Il Gazzettino*, 15 April, 1914. (See Appendix 1 Source 19)

Venice had embraced the music of its most famous recently-dead foreign resident with something of the zeal of the convert. The Venetian critics continued to associate Wagner with French grand opera even in the 1890s, with the critic of the clerical mouthpiece, *La Difesa*, relating the psychology of *Tannhäuser*, not unapprovingly, with Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo*, which must again have had Wagner turning in his grave.[529] But thereafter the ambition of having one Wagner opera during the season became a regular part of the theatre's dealings with both impresarios and the Comune.

This chapter addresses three key questions about opera's place in the Venice of Liberal Italy through the significance of religion in its culture war between secularist radicals on one side and clericals and conservatives on the other. Firstly I consider how Teatro La Fenice negotiated the political turbulence of 1890s Venice and the rapid entrenchment of the Catholic-conservative alliance of Mayor Filippo Grimani, which eviscerated the short-lived secular-progressive administration under Riccardo Selvatico in 1895 to dominate the city until the advent of Fascism. Secondly, I examine the significance which opera held during this period of the development of the Biennale and the cultural and economic project to revive the city when its ethical and religious identity was being contested. Thirdly, from the critical and political reception of the repertoire at the Fenice, I draw conclusions about the growing significance of religious themes within opera and culture more broadly.

In the first quarter century after its unification with the new Italian nation in 1866, La Fenice remained the bastion of the city's liberal elite, until challenged both by changing tastes and the political and religious currents of the 1890s. As we will see, the radical anticlerical left had, largely, a low opinion of opera's utility and questioned the moral and educational arguments made in its favour. While some of the criticisms of subsidising the luxuries of the wealthy private boxholders (*palchisti)* were shared by clerical politicians, the new alliance between the clericals and the conservative moderates was founded on a shared belief in the importance of maintaining Catholic values and teaching at a social level, to act as a bulwark

[529] "Quest'opera [Roberto il Diavolo]… si può classificare psicologicamente col Faust, col Mefistofele, col Tannhäuser". *La Difesa*, 31 Jan-1 Feb, 1890.

against the threat of the rise of Socialism. This coincided with a period of gradual renaissance within the society of boxholders which owned the theatre, and a stronger relationship with the new clerico-moderate administration (*giunta*), which supported seasons which were considered worthy of a *teatro massimo* and Venice's status among the major cities of the Italian kingdom and Europe. Earlier concerns about subsidising opera-going characterised it as a frivolous pastime in which expensive ballets required the importation of foreign dancers rather than giving work to Venetian musicians and craftspeople, and the implication that the theatre could lead Venetian youth towards even less salubrious entertainments elsewhere in the city. Yet by the early 1900s, debate focused increasingly on the seriousness of opera's mission, reflected in an ambition which sought to compete with the international exhibition which became the Biennale, and which would lift the moral tone of the city and appeal to the new class of tourist being attracted to the city.

The primary sources on which this chapter is based include the overlooked archive of Teatro La Fenice (ASTF). Existing publications on the history of the Fenice touch only glancingly on the theatre's relationship to the wider culture and politics of Venice, certainly in the period after 1866.[530] Biggi and Mangini have taken a similar approach to the history of Teatro Malibran up to its restoration in 1912, in a volume which provides the only other systematic chronology of opera performance in Venice apart from at the Fenice.[531] Girardi and Rossi's chronology is based primarily on the archive's collection of playbills, correspondence and scores.[532] The only recent research on the management of the theatre in this period is by Jutta Toelle, in which she analyses surviving data in the Fenice archive about the contractual agreements with impresarios and the Council, correspondence between the Fenice directors and impresarios, and some press reports in *La Gazzetta di Venezia*. [533] She argues that

[530] Michele Girardi and Franco Rossi, *Teatro La Fenice: Cronologia degli Spettacoli: 1792-1936 vol.1* (Venezia: Albrizzi, 1989); Franco Rossi, 'The Historical Archives of The Teatro La Fenice', in *Verdi and La Fenice* (Firenze: Officine, 2000) pp. 131-2.
[531] Maria Ida Biggi and Giorgio Mangini (eds.), *Teatro Malibran: Venezia a San Giovanni Grisostomo* (Venezia, 2001).
[532] As I will discuss later these primary sources are not always wholly reliable as they were printed in advance of the first performance and do not always account for delays to premieres and cast changes necessitated by the inevitable mishaps of opera production.
[533] Jutta Toelle, 'Venice and Its Opera House: Hope and Despair at the Teatro la Fenice, 1866-1897', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 2007, vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 33-54.

the Fenice was particularly vulnerable to the disintegration of the impresa system because of disinterest among the Venetian mercantile political class to subsidising private ventures and the acute economic crisis in the city. Her conclusion is that the Fenice was rescued only by the revival of Venice as a tourist destination at the end of the century through staging spring and summer *stagioni di bagni*. While Toelle's focus on the private status of the Fenice, and the revival of tourism, are clearly important keys to the Fenice's particular fate in this period, my argument takes a broader approach to consider the place of opera within the wider political and religious debates which were central to Venice in this period, and how different factions both within the theatre and the political elite responded. Among the archival series at the Fenice, I explore further the surviving *Spettacoli* files of administrative records, and minutes and correspondence relating to the meetings of the convocation of the society of boxholders (*Convocazione*). Complete sets of the box-office receipts (*Bordereaux*) for each season's performances detail attendance, ticket prices and total income, as well contextual information – a brief weather report and a list of which other theatres were open that evening. While missing at certain periods in terms of the detail of correspondence and negotiation with the municipal *Giunta* and *impresari*, the Fenice's records augment the equally patchy but important municipal records at the Archivio Storico del Comune di Venezia (ASCV). The ASCV files from the Mayor’s private office (*Gabinetto del Sindaco*) are, in many places, lost, but the archive does hold the published proceedings of the City Council (*Atti del Consiglio Comunale*) which enables a more detailed reconstruction than previously about the relationship between politics and the theatre, as well as data in the volumes of municipal budgets (*Bilanci Preventivi*) which confirm details of some subsidies granted to the theatre. Furthermore, my research has highlighted that the existing chronology of the Fenice has ignored the wealth of critical commentary and wider context within the Venetian press. On occasion this has involved significant details about the date and circumstances of performances, notably the Venetian premiere of *Parsifal* which opened this chapter, to which I will return later. In the next section of this chapter I map out the changing political contours in Venice until the entrenchment of the Grimani coalition at the beginning of the new century, affiliations between the political gradations of liberals, moderates and conservatives, and how religious symbols and practices came to define the terms of political debate about civic life and cultural consumption.

Politics and culture wars in Venice after 1866

Venice's unique history as a republic and imperial centre, then latterly a province of the Habsburg Empire until 1866, shaped its response to integration into the new Italian State and requires a brief introduction to provide context for the discussion of opera's place in the city's culture wars. The fault-line in politics in Italy between the Liberal support base of the new State, and Catholics both within the Church hierarchy and among the laity, was also coloured by Venice's particular religious history stretching back at least to the city's interdicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We see this most clearly in the debates in the *Consiglio Comunale* and the press about the erection of the monument to sixteenth-century renegade priest, Paolo Sarpi, which I discuss below. While Venetian clerics bemoaned the lack of piety among the poor, Catholic belief among the middle classes remained strong. Even among liberal intellectuals who rejected the authority of the Church, a recognition of the power of religious belief, Catholic values and the Judeo-Christian tradition, drove many with a positivist, secular worldview to seek an accommodation with Catholicism, either to fend off the threat of radical Socialism or to search for new forms of belief and spiritualism.[534]

The liberal majority among the Venetian elite who dominated politics until the 1890s had been largely disconnected from Risorgimento politics.[535] The fluidity of affiliations and gradations between the broad range of Liberals and Moderates who supported the constitutional basis of the new state, and clerical intransigents on the one hand, and radicals (or *progressisti)*, Republicans and Socialists on the other, is

[534] See especially Raffaele Romanelli, *L'Italia liberale 1861-1900* (Bologna: Mulino, 1979) pp.324-338; Martin Pappenheim, 'Roma o morte: culture wars in Italy' in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) pp.202-226.
[535] David Laven and Elsa Damien, 'Empire, City, Nation: Venice's imperial past and the 'making of Italians' from unification to fascism', in Alexei Miller and Stefan Berger (eds.), *Regional integration as a function of empire* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015) pp. 511-552.

reflected in Liberal attempts to maintain control against these two 'extremes'. For example, Sindaco Antonio Fornoni wrote to the Prefect:[536]

> Also in Venice there is a struggle between the party of the Church on one side and the liberals on the other, more or less progressive. There is a small network of ultra-conservative moderates, and then there are lots of gradations of moderate liberals. Among the clericals and ultra-conservatives there spread some exaggerations… among the progressives, there isn't one who seriously holds to radicalism, and their inclination is towards order and conservatism.[537]

In 1874 the Prefect instructed Fornoni to bolster liberal support against the clerical party which was trying to insinuate itself, "little by little through the elections, in the municipal administrations with the aim of opposing every measure which directly or indirectly favours the principles of progress or liberty…"[538] This spectrum is further complicated, however, by the divisions on the question of religion and politics which also existed within prominent Venetian families. For example, among the noble Papadopoli family, Nicolò was a leading member of the conservative moderates who allied with the clericals from 1893 onwards. His brother, Angelo was a more progressive liberal member of the National Assembly, as well as President of the *Associazione Veneziana della Gioventù Anticlericale*, and led debate about how liberals should respond to the clerical-moderate alliance, having also written in his youth about how charity should be reformed along laicized lines while instilling moral values and a work ethic among the poor.[539]

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[536] Italian Prefects were the states representative in each province. Their powers were extensive, including appointment of mayors (until 1889), approval of budgets, and responsibility for the police, security and operation of the censorship laws. See, Nico Randeraad, *Autorità in cerca di autonomia : i prefetti nell'Italia liberale* (Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1997).
[537] Barizza, *Il Comune di Venezia*, p. 21, n. 30.
[538] Ibid., p. 21 n. 31.
[539] Daniele Ceschin, 'L'esperienza politica di Riccardo Selvatico e l'idea di democrazia nella Venezia di fine ottocento' in Tiziano Agostini (ed.), *Venezia nell' età di Riccardo Selvatico*, (Venezia, Ateneo Veneto, 2004) p. 31; Il Gazzettino, 'Conferenza Papadopoli', 16 January 1896; Angelo Papadopoli, 'Della necessità di un nuovo indirizzo nella pubblica beneficenza in Venezia' (Venice: Marco Visentini, 1871), quoted in Richard Bosworth, *Italian Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 2014 pp. 36-37 and n. 51.

Although the Papal ban on political participation in national elections (the *non expedit*) continued, Catholics began mobilising at a local level, primarily through the *Opera dei Congressi*, established in 1874 to counter the liberalism of the new state and organise Catholic opinion to support candidates who defend the rights of the Church and religious teaching. This began to bear fruit in Councillors elected across the Veneto.[540] The national president of the Congress, Giovanni Battista Paganuzzi, was a Venetian noble, who also joined the Consiglio Comunale in 1893 as part of the new clerico-moderate alliance. Yet Catholic leadership in Venice was also divided about its response to the Italian State. When King Vittorio Emanuele II died in 1878, intransigents like Giuseppe Sacchetti, the director of the clerical newspaper *Il Veneto Cattolico*, used the occasion to launch polemics against the monarchy and the liberal state. In contrast, the Venetian Patriarch, Domenico Agostini, ordered church bells rung and masses said for the dead king as "an act of piety and dutiful reverence to the memory of He who was invested, also for us, with authority and divine mission".[541]

In 1889 electoral reforms made a modest widening of the franchise, and delegated the appointment of local mayors from the State to the municipal *Consiglio Comunale*.[542] The elections in November 1889 resulted in a Council in which a new generation of men from across the political spectrum emerged, including art critic and historian Pompeo Molmenti, antiquarian Michelangelo Guggenheim, poet and playwright Riccardo Selvatico and teacher Giovanni Bordiga.[543] The first worker was also elected to the Council – this following a bitter dispute in the press when *La Gazzetta* enraged the *progressisti* by suggesting the new franchise would result in

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[540] Silvio Tramontin, *Il Patriarcato di Venezia* (Venezia: Giunta Regionale del Veneto, 1991) pp.210-212; 'Il Movimento Cattolico' in Gabriele Ingegneri (a cura), *La Chiesa veneziana dal 1849 alle soglie del novecento* (Venezia: Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1987) pp. 165-188.

[541] Patriarca Agostini, lettera al clero e al popolo, 11 January 1878, quoted in Bruno Bertoli, 'La Pastorale di Fronte ai mutamenti culturali e politici della società veneziana' in Ingegneri, *La Chiesa veneziana*, p. 61. His predecessor as Patriarch when union with Italy occurred in 1866, Giuseppe Trevisanato, notwithstanding his strongly antiliberal views, had also recognised the union of the Veneto with Italy, and defended himself against criticism for this from other bishops.

[542] In Venice, from a population of 130,000 in 1883, there were 7,174 registered voters, of whom 2,820 voted. In 1889 from a population of 137,000, 11,350 voters were enrolled, of whom 5,723 voted, see Barizza, *Il Comune di Venezia*, pp. 52-54.

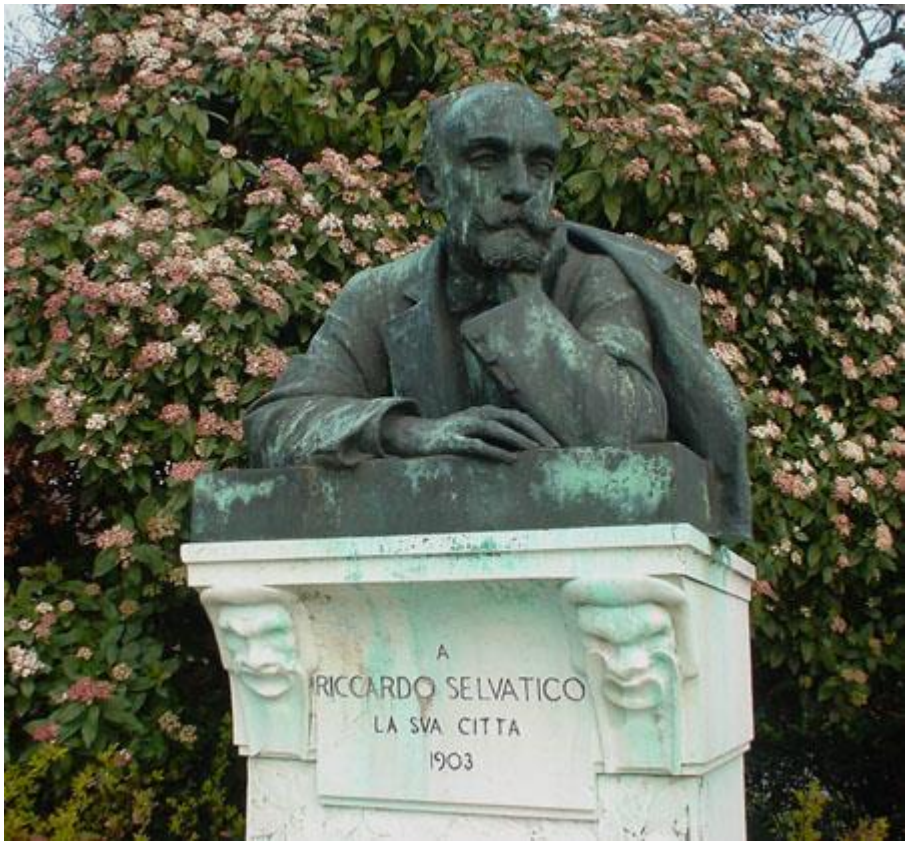
[543] Ibid., pp. 52-53; Ceschin, 'L'esperienza politica', p. 25.

the ignorant and illiterate being able to vote.[544] To underline the fluidity of allegiances at this point, Molmenti, who was to be a pivotal political and cultural figure in this period of transition in Venetian politics, stood under two lists in the 1889 elections, the liberal-moderate Associazione constituzionale Camillo Cavour and the radical-progressive ‘Comitato degli elettori liberali’. Molmenti, whose youthful writings were anticlerical and rationalist, influenced by his Socialist mother, gradually became more convinced of the social importance of the Church and its teachings in a rapidly changing society. His wife, Amalia Brunati, was described as extremely devout.[545]

The resulting Council was able to agree a broad-based majority excluding those from the clerical list, from whom emerged the moderate aristocrat Lorenzo Tiepolo as compromise candidate for mayor, under a programme to reduce taxation on ordinary Venetians and encourage housing and sanitation for the poorest classes. Selvatico became an *Assessore* (Assessor or cabinet member) in the new *giunta*.[546] However, the *progressisti* were the dominant force, and the tensions with the moderates immediately showed, leading to Tiepolo's resignation the following April, and opening the way for the election of a Mayor more in tune with the progressive programme. From this Selvatico emerged as Mayor, even though the '*Sindaco-Poeta*' was also known less flatteringly as the '*Sindaco di Paglia*' – the 'Mayor of Straw', supposedly the front man for the more radical Sebastiano Tecchio (director of the radical newspaper *L’Adriatico*), and Bordiga.

[544] Barizza, *Il Comune di Venezia*, p. 24, n. 42.
[545] Monica Donaglio, 'Il Politico', in Pavannello, Giuseppe (ed), *Venezia nell'età di Pompeo Molmenti* (Venezia, Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004) pp. 129-164.
[546] Ceschin, 'L'esperienza politica’, p. 15.

Fig. 41 Bust of Riccardo Selvatico in the Giardini (Pietro Canonica, 1903)



The programme of the new administration was strongly secular, with an agenda to laicise public education and charity, and this agenda, along with new cultural initiatives, dominated the period of his administration to 1895, though Ceschin reminds us that although these have received the most attention, they were only the most controversial policies of the Giunta, while its wider social reform programme was often bipartisan.[547] The laicizing agenda was initially inspired and enabled by premier Francesco Crispi's national persecution of Catholic institutions and structures. In particular, the *Opere Pie,* charitable institutions traditionally run by the church, were reformed, and the requirement for religious education was repealed.[548] However, Crispi's volte-face on seeking a rapprochement with the Church in 1893 would severely undermine the Selvatico regime's political base.[549]

The first flashpoint in Venice was the long-running campaign, begun in 1875, to erect a memorial to Paolo Sarpi in Campo Santa Fosca. Sarpi was a Venetian priest and scientist, devoted to the Serene Republic, who advocated the separation of Church and State and fought against the Papal interdict against the city. This biography had long made him a cause-celèbre of Risorgimentalists, which united all but those Catholics who heeded the Church's protestations that Sarpi was a heretic rather than a hero.[550] The new political atmosphere encouraged the more anticlerical figures in the Giunta and its mouthpiece, *L'Adriatico*, to expound Sarpi's virtues in terms of his heterodox, anti-papist theology. More moderate liberals, like Molmenti, preferred to highlight Sarpi's scientific credentials. Antonio Fradeletto, longstanding friend of both Selvatico and Molmenti, who would become the first director of the Biennale, argued that Sarpi's theology had always remained Catholic, unlike Giordano Bruno, whose memorialisation in Campo dei Fiori in Rome in 1889 had drawn the ire of the Pope because of the Masonic flavour of the celebrations led by playwright Giovanni Bovio.[551] To the Catholic intransigents, this was intolerable hypocrisy about a priest who remained anathematised, opposed by clericals in the Council and in the pages

[547] Ceschin, 'L'Esperienza Politica', p. 18.
[548] Lyttleton, *Liberal and Fascist Italy*, (Oxford: OUP, 2002) pp. 47-48.
[549] Luciano Pomoni, 'L' Ascesa e la caduta di un Sindaco-Poeta' in Agostini, *Venezia*, p.110.
[550] Vittorio Frajese, *Sarpi scettico: Stato e Chiesa a Venezia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1994).
[551] On the Bruno controversy in Rome and Crispi's ambivalence see Martin Pappenheim, 'Roma o morte', pp. 217-223.

of *La difesa* (formerly titled *Il Veneto Cattolico*), and which further stimulated the organisation of the *Opera dei Congressi*, led by Paganuzzi, and local Catholic committees.[552] An enormous crowd turned out at the local church of San Marcuola for a day of penance organised by the parish.[553] Selvatico, as Mayor, in presiding over the final inauguration of the Sarpi monument, presented Sarpi, Bruno and Gallilei as a trinity of heroes against obscurantism, vindicated through the values of the new State and which inspired his programme for laicization and transformation of society and culture.[554]

[552] Eva Cecchinato, 'L'Anticlericalismo come ideologia e il laicismo come metodo' in Agostini, *Venezia*, pp. 58-69; Tramontin, *Il Patriarcato*, p. 210.
[553] Bertoli, 'La Pastorale', p. 74.
[554] Cecchinato, 'L'Anticlericalismo', pp. 69-72.

Fig. 42 Postcard, Paolo Sarpi statue inauguration (Emilio Marsili, 1892)

L'INAUGURAZIONE DEL MONUMENTO A FRA PAOLO SARPI IN VENEZIA. — La statua in bronzo del Sarpi, opera del Marsili.

Symbols and monuments were crucial tools in the post-unification attempts to create a sense of Italian nationhood, and these were often based on Catholic tradition.[555] But if the Sarpi monument was a symbolic manifestation of the battle between religious and secular views which motivated mainly opposing factions within the elite, the Selvatico administration also attacked symbols with more popular appeal, for example the votive bridges used for religious festivals and public funding for these celebrations.[556] The Giunta rapidly moved on to even more controversial ground when Giovanni Bordiga issued a circular in November 1892 to laicize public schools by restricting religious education, and to ban prayers in lessons and the display of crucifixes in classrooms. Bordiga recalled that on visiting a class of children learning about Italian history, only three out of fifty had ever visited the Palazzo Ducale, an example which stimulated his plan to ensure each school visited local sites associated with Venetian history and the Risorgimento.[557] *La Difesa* countered that it was unacceptable that "the rights of the Catholic majority of schoolchildren, should be curtailed in order not to hurt the feelings of a few fathers who were Jews or freemasons".[558] The new law of 17 July 1890 reforming the *Opere Pie* gave Selvatico and his close colleagues the cover to replace ecclesiastical figures and supporters on their boards which heightened the sense of a religious struggle.[559] In 1892, the Giunta also gave an annual grant of L10,000 to the new *Camera del Lavoro*, in an attempt to stimulate greater organisation among the Venetian workers and counter the rise of catholic opposition, and also gave them office accommodation in the former Church of the Misericordia, thereby further outraging Catholic opinion and unnerving moderate liberals like Molmenti about the rise of Socialism.[560]

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[555] Alberto Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, sanità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000) pp. 119-28.
[556] Ceschin, ‘L'Esperienza politica’, p. 46. There had been more religious festivals in Venice than even in Papal Rome, according to one liberal proponent of their reduction in the Consiglio Comunale, Niccolò Antonini, who suggested they caused not only disruption to business but also opportunity for public disorder. See Bertoli, ‘La Pastorale’ p. 74 and n. 144.
[557] Cecchinato, 'L'Anticlericalismo', p. 84.
[558] "il diritto della maggioranza cattolica della scolaresca, abbia da essere conculcato per non urtare I nervi di qualche padre ebreo o frammassone". *La Difesa*, 24-25 November, 1892.
[559] Franzina, ‘L' eredità’, p.116.
[560] Ceschin, 'L'Esperienza politica' p. 34; Cecchinato, 'L'Anticlericalismo' p. 84; Monica Donaglio, 'Il Politico', pp. 142-143.

By the annual elections of June 1893, the moderates and clericals were fielding a joint list of candidates, from whom were elected or re-elected Grimani himself, former mayor Fornoni, the conservative Catholic Vittorio Vanzetti, industrialist and leading clerical politician Pacifico Ceresa, Paganuzzi, former Mayor Serego degli Alighieri and Nicolò Papadopoli – all of whom would take active part in the continuing debates about the Fenice.[561] The appointment by Crispi of the conservative Neapolitan noble, Emilio Caracciolo di Sarno, as Prefect of Venice, pointed to the new direction nationally in the battle between Church and State, as Crispi abandoned some of his previous anticlericalism to fend off the threat from the left. In March 1895, an Antiradical Committee, with Fornoni as President, was organising against the radical left, which prepared the way for the strengthening of the alliance with the clericals in the elections of July 1895, with the encouragement of Caracciolo and the deeply intransigent new Patriarch Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pope Pius X.[562]

Sarto arrived in Venice as the new Patriarch in November 1894, and immediately began organising a rapprochement with the moderates to undermine the Selvatico administration. Sarto, it should be said, had been snubbed on his arrival by the Giunta, which had historically always welcomed the new Patriarch in person.[563] However, Sarto's assumption of his position had been facilitated by Crispi's own volte-face on becoming premier for a second time. In order to widen his electoral base and bolster support for his imperial adventures in east Africa, Crispi abandoned his earlier anticlerical rhetoric, and conceded to the Pope the *Exequatur,* which allowed him to recommence direct appointments to senior positions, including Sarto.[564]

During Sarto’s first months as Patriarch preparations were in full swing for what would become the first Venice Biennale. The close political friendship of Selvatico and Fradeletto, teacher, leader of educational reform and member of the National

[561] Ceschin, 'L'Esperienza politica' p. 38 n. 72.
[562] Pomoni, 'L' ascesa', p. 108.
[563] Silvio Tramontin, 'Il Movimento Cattolico' in Gabriele Ingegneri (a cura), *La Chiesa Veneziana dal 1849 alle soglie del novecento* (Venice: ESCV, 1987) p.181.
[564] Annibale Zamberbieri, 'Il Patriarca Sarto' in Ingegneri, *La Chiesa Veneziana dal 1849*, pp. 139-141; Franzina, 'La Politica', p. 126.

Assembly of a conservative-liberal leaning, ovesaw its genesis in 1893-5.[565] The expense and political significance of the Exhibition became yet another point of controversy between clerical conservatives and the range of liberals from the *progressisti* to the moderates broadly supportive of a project which promised to rejuvenate Venice's image, reputation and economy. To put it in context, the early Biennale exhibitions received a budget of L250,000, compared to the largest subsidy for the Fenice in the 1880s of L50,000, though subsequently the largest grant to the Fenice was L22,000 in 1900.[566] However, it worth noting that this cultural project faced opposition from within the progressive majority, as well as clericals, because of the costs to the Council diverting them from the priority of reducing the fiscal burden on the poor.[567] *La Gazzetta* parodied Selvatico's persona as '*sindaco-poeta*' asking which aspect would win out – the economising mayor or the patron of artists.[568] The first Committee which oversaw the Biennale included Councillors who were also prominent boxholders at the Fenice – the conservative industrialists Nicolò Papadopoli and Giovanni Stucky who would both becomes members of the succeeding clerico-moderate regime, as well as the radical antiquarian and businessman Michelangelo Guggenheim.[569]

Perhaps the greatest cause-celebre was the display at the first Biennale in 1895 of *Il Supremo Convegno* by the torinese artist Giacomo Grosso, which depicted a group of naked women in a church ecstatically draped over the coffin of a shrouded figure, given to represent a Don Juan character. In the background the figures of three other women, possibly nuns, hover.

[565] Ceschin, *La Voce di Venezia*, p. 112.
[566] ASCV, Bilanci Preventivi, 1897-1901 and 1902-1906.
[567] Ceschin, 'L'esperienza politica', p. 37.
[568] "Vedremo chi vincerà; se il sindaco o se l'artista!" *La Gazzetta*, 16 April 1895, quoted in Ceschin, *La Voce di Venezia*, p. 118.
[569] ASCV, Atti del Consiglio Comunale (ACC), 30 March 1894.

Fig. 43 Giacomo Grosso, *Il Supremo Convegno* (1895)[570]

[570] The canvas itself was destroyed by fire in transit to an exhibition in the USA. This reproduction is from the Turin satirical periodical *Il Fischietto*.

Although the canvas had already been exhibited in Turin, and the Mayor of Turin reassured Riccardo Selvatico of its artistic quality, the immediate public scandal caused him to appoint a commission to judge its artistic and moral qualities, which included playwrights Giuseppe Giacosa and Enrico Castelnuovo, Pompeo Molmenti, and the devoutly Catholic but liberal Vicentine novelist Antonio Fogazzaro, whom Selvatico described to Sarto as "un spirito eminentemente cattolico". In clearing the work of any offence to morals and suitable for public viewing, Fogazzaro was explicit in identifying its moral as well as aesthetic quality. He was forced to defend himself in the Vicentine press:

> In giving my vote for the admission of *Il Supremo Convegno*, I am not inspired by moral criteria which you would call secular. The nudity in this painting and in this setting, it seems to me, should have a moral impact. The women in the painting are clearly drawn from the artist's fantasy and sense of heightened tragedy; their brutish, shameless nudity, a terrible desecration, has an immensely tragic meaning. The face of the corpse and the limbs of the living, are trying to depict, and manage to convey strongly, the blows and chastisements of a brutal passion.[571]

The public was clearly moved in a similar way, because Grosso was awarded the public prize at the Exhibition with 547 votes ahead of the critics' choice, *La Figlia di Jorio* by Paolo Michetti (with 185 votes). Michetti's painting, drawing on his native Abruzzo, was the inspiration for his fellow countryman Gabriele D'Annunzio to write his play of the same name, discussed in chapters I and II.[572] Encouraged by Francesco Saccardo, editor of the clerical mouthpiece, *La Difesa*, Patriarch Sarto, remained unmoved by such aesthetic judgements, condemned the painting and entered into a public correspondence with Selvatico. Despite the discrete precaution of the painting being exhibited in a curtained-off side room, Sarto banned all priests from visiting the Exhibition. Even the Mayor of Turin admitted that the total nudity of

[571] Quoted in Romolo Bazzoni, *60 anni della Biennale* (Venice: ASAC, 1962) pp. 25-34, which also records the complete correspondence between Sarto and Selvatico about the painting.
[572] Bazzoni, *60 anni della Biennale*, pp. 25-34; Gianfranco Pontel, 'Riccardo Selvatico nelle memorie dell' ASAC della Biennale di Venezia', in Agostini, Venezia nell' età…, pp. 272-274.

the female figures did rather stretch liberal tolerance, and he wished Grosso might have added at least some flowers for discretion.[573] However, the clerical objections to the work were based on its religious offence as much as the sexual morality and nudity of the painting.[574] Setting the nudity aside, the ambience and subject of the painting is highly reminiscent of several operatic scenarios which even the clerical *La Difesa* appreciated in context, perhaps the Wagnerian seductions at the Venusburg in *Tannhäuser* or the Flowermaidens in Act II of *Parsifal*, but most especially given the ecclesiastical setting and monastic implication, the tomb scene from Act III of Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavolo* and the ballet of the nuns. Curiously, only five years before, the correspondent of Saccardo's newspaper had written enthusiastically about the return of Meyerbeer's opera to the Fenice after many years' absence. Although he criticised the overall standard of execution as mediocre, the tomb scene in which the ghosts of dead nuns are summoned to seduce Roberto, was singled out for praise, and clearly raised no issue of propriety.[575] Allowing for the necessity of diaphanous costumes from which an audience could read both religious habits and sepulchral shrouds, the atmosphere and composition of Grosso's painting is not far from early representations of this scene, notably Degas' depiction of the scene from the front of the stalls at the Paris Opera, or even the original *bozzetti* for the Paris Opera whose productions clearly remained the benchmark, even for some Italian

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[573] Biblioteca Museo Correr (BMC), Archivio Privato Selvatico, fasc. 22, Ernesto Balbo Bertone de Sambuy a Riccardo Selvatico, 2 May 1895, quoted in Ceschin, *La Voce di Venezia*, p. 117, n. 25.

[574] *La Difesa*, 29-30 April, 1895. The paper took great pleasure in claiming that when the King and Queen visited the Exhibition and were shown *Il Supremo Convegno*, "Queen Margherita fairly showed her evident distaste for it, and turned hurriedly her gaze away from the canvas and moved to distance herself from it along with the King…" "dimostrò abbastanza evidentemente l'impressione disgustosa che ne riceveva, e torcendo energeticamente lo sguardo del quadro tendeva ad allontanarsene col re…" *La Difesa*, 30 April-1 May, 1895. In contrast, it was reported in *La Gazzetta Piemontese* the following day that Empress Elisabeth of Austria's reaction was rather different on being shown the painting, "Il y a trop de fleurs!", 'L'imperatrice d'Austria e il Supremo Convegno', *La Gazzetta Piemontese,* 3 May 1895.

[575] "The tomb scene although it can't be compared to that at the Paris Opera, just for the scenery and the way in which it was executed pleased the public and showed the diligence with which the impresario, for his part, had done everything to maintain his own standards". ["La scena della tomba sebbene non sia da mettersi a confronto con quella dell'Opera di Parigi, pure e pel scenario e pel modo con cui venne eseguita appagò il pubblico e mostro la diligenza dell'impresa che del canto suo fa di tutto per mantenere i suoi impegni".] *La Difesa*, 6-7 February 1890.

audiences.[576] The suggestion of necrophilia in the painting may have been the factor which clericals found too obnoxious, yet the different reactions are still striking.

[576] Degas suggests ennui among the audience towards this forty-year-old scene as their gaze wanders away from the action of the ballet.

Fig. 44 Edgar Degas, 'The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer's Opera *Robert Le Diable'* (1876). Copyright Victoria and Albert Museum

A final artistic spectacle to outrage clerical opinion was the premiere on 10 July 1894 in the Teatro Malibran, of the prose play, *Cristo alla Festa di Purim*, by the republican Giovanni Bovio. Bovio's reimagining of a new testament story to infuse Christ's mission with a political reading outraged more conservative catholic opinion and the Church across the peninsula, as well as infuriating Crispi at a time when he was building bridges with the Church in order to fend off the threat from the Left. The reaction of Prefect di Sarno, was more sanguine, as he wrote to the author to say that the play had actually strengthened his faith.[577] As discussed in chapter I a libretto based on the play was set as an opera by Giacomo Giannetti in the same year as its premiere, but was only given its Italian premiere in 1904 in Turin.[578] What is instructive about these examples is the diverging ways in which the religious content of different artistic media were viewed. Prose drama and visual art were generally apt to cause severe offence and scandal to religious opinion, whereas opera, increasingly suffused with religious themes and imagery, both orthodox and exotic, was largely read as consistent with conservative moral values. Yet we also have an example here of where an operatic adaptation featuring Jesus Christ seems to have prevented its production.

The triumph of the new clerico-conservative alliance led rapidly to the revocation of all the laicizing measures instituted by Selvatico and Bordiga – the grant to the *Camera del Lavoro*, the expulsion of Catholics from the *Opere Pie.* Religious education, prayers and symbols in schools and the municipal funding and recognition of religious festivals were all reinstated, with fulsome approval of the clerical *La Difesa*. Its editor, Francesco Saccardo was an intimate of Patriarch Sarto and his brother Antonio was a member of Grimani's coalition in the Council. Saccardo himself would himself be elected in 1905. [579] This agenda of consolidating the hold of Catholic morality and culture on education and public life was implemented first and foremost by the *assessore* for Public Instruction, Pompeo Molmenti. As Monica Donaglio writes, “at the centre of his interests we always find

[577] Nani, '*Il Cristo* di Bovio e il suo pubblico', pp. 147-192.
[578] It was also part of season proposed for La Fenice in 1914-15 by the Cooperativa Artistica dei Grandi Spettacoli Lirici CAGSL, of which Giannetti was the Executive head, and Usigli the honorary President, which never came to fruition. ASTF, Spettacoli 1912-1920, Fasc. 1914 Varie, CAGSL to DTF, 6 December 1914.
[579] Donaglio, 'Il Politico', pp. 129-164.

the relationship between science and faith, a scientific progress which might not be separated from ethics and religion… you can see in him the conviction that there was an opportunity to facilitate the spread of catholic principles through society".[580] Molmenti was a liberal who recognised the value of pervasive Catholic values which he and other liberals needed to harness against the greater threat of socialism and modernism.[581]

This summary of the political currents of the six years between 1889 and 1895, in which forces were realigned against the progressive left, shows that the religious issues at the heart of competing visions of Venetian and Italian society found expression in the controversies over cultural representation of religion in settings including public monuments, the visual arts and theatre, while operatic depiction of religion was overlooked by clerical conservatives.[582] In the next section I set the troubled institution of La Fenice within these debates about the city's political and religious complexion.

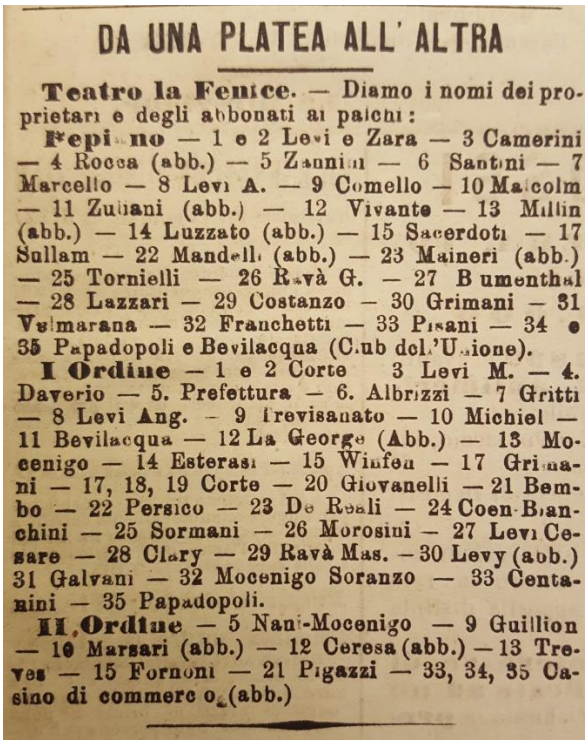
[580] Ibid., pp.136, 144; ASCV, ACC, 18.11.95.
[581] Donaglio, 'Il Politico', pp.144-150; Franzina, 'L' eredità dell'ottocento', pp.137-8.
[582] Interestingly, some contemporary evidence drawing together the attempted censorship of these different works can be found in *La Gazzetta Piemontese*. Its report on the proceedings of the Commission appointed to examine the painting's moral implications complained about other recent cases of censorship, saying that "Yesterday it was *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* that was banned to appease the feelings of the clericals… tomorrow it will be *San Paolo* [Bovio's next play] as today it is *Il Supremo Convegno* and before it was *Le Nostre Schiave*…" *Le Nostre* Schiave was a sculpture of three reclining naked female figures by Domenico Ghidoni which had been refused for an exhibition in Milan because of the subject. "Ieri fu il *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* che venne proibito per accontentare le esigenze dei clericali… domani sarà *San Paolo* come fu oggi *il Supremo Convegno* e ieri *Le Nostre Schiave*…". '*Il Supremo Convegno* e la Morale nell'Arte', *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 2 May 1895.

Teatro La Fenice's political and social status

As with other Italian theatres which had been controlled by a society of aristocratic box-holders, La Fenice struggled through the fiscal restrictions of the post-1866 decades to satisfy competing interests. However, unlike some other theatres which had been municipalized following unification (like the Teatro Regio di Torino), it remained a private society. Increasingly, the conservative tastes of many of the *palchisti*, who considered a mixed programme of grand opera and ballet a part of their contract with the theatre, came into conflict with the changing tastes of the cultural elite and the civic and economic policies of the *Comune*, while the financial stability necessary to maintain regular seasons, and the complexity of the impresario system in negotiating contracts added further challenges. As Toelle has detailed, the Fenice struggled to attract top quality impresarios, who frequently pulled out of their contract before the end of a season.[583] The *Società del Teatro La Fenice* was governed by an Assembly of members (*soci*), or boxholders (*palchisti)*, whose contract with the theatre allowed them rights of access in return for a contribution to the annual budget (*canone*) which the Assembly would set, on the recommendation of the board of directors, itself elected annually by the members, to finance each season. The contribution of each member, and the number of the votes they could cast at meetings of the Assembly, depended on a detailed pricing structure of all the boxes of the theatre.[584] Though comprehensive lists of all boxholders do not survive, the records of each meeting of the Assembly indicates the most assiduous attendees or those sending proxies. Furthermore, *La Gazzetta di Venezia* occasionally published lists of boxholders on the opening night of the main Carnival season on 26 December, a particularly helpful example of which is from 1889.

[583] Toelle, 'Venice and its Opera House', pp. 38-45.
[584] The formula is detailed in Pietro Faustini, *Memorie storiche ed artistiche sul Teatro La Fenice in Venezia* (Venice, 1902) pp. 41-42.

Fig. 45 List of Boxholders at Teatro La Fenice, *La Gazzetta di Venezia*, 26 December 1889.[585]



DA UNA PLATEA ALL' ALTRA

Teatro la Fenice. — Diamo i nomi dei proprietari e degli abbonati ai palchi:

Pepino — 1 e 2 Levi e Zara — 3 Camerini — 4 Rocca (abb.) — 5 Zannini — 6 Santini — 7 Marcello — 8 Levi A. — 9 Comello — 10 Malcolm — 11 Zuliani (abb.) — 12 Vivante — 13 Millin (abb.) — 14 Luzzato (abb.) — 15 Sacerdoti — 17 Sullam — 22 Mandelli (abb.) — 23 Maineri (abb.) — 25 Tornielli — 26 Ravà G. — 27 Blumenthal — 28 Lazzari — 29 Costanzo — 30 Grimani — 31 Valmarana — 32 Franchetti — 33 Pisani — 34 e 35 Papadopoli e Bevilacqua (Club dell'Unione).

I Ordine — 1 e 2 Corte 3 Levi M. — 4. Daverio — 5. Prefettura — 6. Albrizzi — 7 Gritti — 8 Levi Ang. — 9 Trevisanato — 10 Michiel — 11 Bevilacqua — 12 La George (Abb.) — 13 Mocenigo — 14 Esterasi — 15 Winfen — 17 Grimani — 17, 18, 19 Corte — 20 Giovanelli — 21 Bembo — 22 Persico — 23 De Reali — 24 Coen-Bianchini — 25 Sormani — 26 Morosini — 27 Levi Cesare — 28 Clary — 29 Ravà Mas. — 30 Levy (abb.) 31 Galvani — 32 Mocenigo Soranzo — 33 Centanini — 35 Papadopoli.

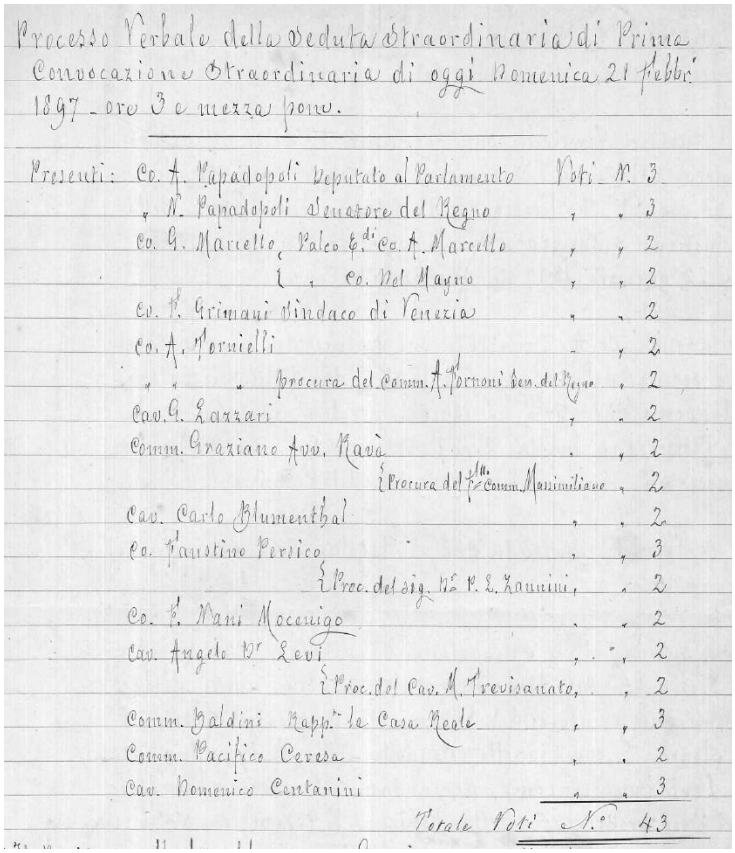
II Ordine — 5 Nani-Mocenigo — 9 Guillion — 10 Marsari (abb.) — 12 Ceresa (abb.) — 13 Treves — 15 Fornoni — 21 Pigazzi — 33, 34, 35 Casino di commercio (abb.)

[585] As indicated by the box no. 5 in the *primo Ordine*, all theatres were required to reserve space for the Prefect in his role superintending the censorship laws and public order.

The directors of the Fenice Society, and the wider group of boxholders, were highly integrated with the membership of the *Consiglio Comunale* and the regimes of successive *sindaci*. A few examples will illustrate the extent of these relationships, most of whom are represented in the notice in *La Gazzetta* pictured above. Liberal Mayor (1872-1875) and senator, Antonio Fornoni, served as one of the senior directors of the Fenice until his death in 1897, while remaining a member of the *Consiglio*, elected among the top three councillors at successive elections until 1895. Many other directors of the Fenice, such as Alessandro Tornielli, were also councillors or members of the *giunta*. Graziano Ravà was simultaneously President of the Assembly of the Fenice and *Assessore* for the police. Giuseppe Valmarana, a councillor in the first post-unification administration was throughout the 1880s Ravà's predecessor as Fenice President, while his relatives, Massimiliano and Ludovico assumed positions within the *giunta*.[586]

[586] The longevity of the connection between the Valmarana and the Fenice is demonstrated by the current presidency of the Foundation of the Friends of the Fenice of Contessa Barbara di Valmarana.

Fig. 46 Voting List from the proceedings of the Fenice Society of boxholders. ASTF, XXX.



Processo Verbale della Seduta Straordinaria di Prima Convocazione Straordinaria di oggi Domenica 21 febbr. 1897 - ore 3 e mezza pom.

Presenti: Co. A. Papadopoli Deputato al Parlamento	Voti N.	3
" N. Papadopoli Senatore del Regno	"	3
Co. G. Marcello, Palco 6.to di Co. A. Marcello	"	2
" " Co. Nel Magno	"	2
Co. P. Grimani Sindaco di Venezia	"	2
Co. A. Morosini	"	2
" " " Procura del Comm. A. Formoni Sen. del Regno	"	2
Cav. G. Lazzari	"	2
Comm. Graziano Avv. Ravà	"	2
Procura del Sig.r Comm. Massimiliano	"	2
Cav. Carlo Blumenthal	"	2
Co. Faustino Persico	"	3
Proc. del sig. Nob. P. L. Zannini	"	2
Co. F. Nani Mocenigo	"	2
Cav. Angelo Dr Levi	"	2
Proc. del Cav. M. Trevisanato	"	2
Comm. Baldini Rapp.te la Casa Reale	"	3
Comm. Pacifico Ceresa	"	2
Cav. Domenico Centanini	"	3
Totale Voti N.°		43

However, the records of the meetings of the *Consiglio Comunale*, the proceedings of the Society of the Fenice, and local press reports, reveal a predominance of moderate liberal (conservative), and clerical opinion among the Fenice boxholders and directors. Leading *progressisti*, including Selvatico, Bordiga and Sebastiano Tecchio, showed their clear antipathy towards the management and membership of the Fenice by opposing requests for subsidies, sometimes supported by clerical Councillors who agreed that the priority to reduce the burden on the poor should take precedence over subsidising the self-interest of the rich. Less partisan liberal figures, like Tiepolo and Molmenti, were pragmatically supportive of the theatre, but wary of burdening the municipal budget. Few of the radicals were prominent boxholders of the Fenice during this period. Conversely, Filippo Grimani himself was an active boxholder who became torn between his loyalty to the theatre and exasperation at its inability to mount financially sustainable seasons.

As well as the main political divisions between shades of Catholic and anticlerical opinion, the representation of Jewish families is an important social and cultural influence in the Venice of Liberal Italy. As Simon Levis Sullam has pointed out Jewish Venetians were represented in both conservative and moderate regimes in Venice, for example Prospero Ascoli and Ravà.[587] Analysis of the Fenice archives also shows that Marco 'Bismarck' Sullam was *Direttore degli Spettacoli* at the turn of the century, and his brother Benedetto was also an active boxholder. Numerous other Jewish families, as we can see from the list published by *La Gazzetta* above, were represented among the *palchisti,* for example Amedeo Grassini, conservative intimate of Patriarca Sarto, whose daughter, Margherita, would marry prominent Venetian advocate Cesare Sarfatti, with whom she would embrace Socialism, the progressive arts and become the Fascist colleague and lover of Mussolini.[588] It is interesting to note also that the family of Patriarch Trevisianto also kept a box in the *primo ordine*. Other prominent *palchisti* and directors included the Papadopoli brothers Nicolò and Angelo, Pacifico Ceresa and Gian Carlo Stucky. Among the

[587] Levis Sullam, *Una comunità immaginata* (Venice: 2001).
[588] Philip Cannistraro and Brian Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman: The Untold Story of Margherita Sarfatti* (New York: William Morrow, 1993). The Franchetti family was also an important Jewish family in Venice with its own box as listed in *La Gazzetta*, and important musical scion in composer Alberto.

artistic elite, Grassini's brother-in-law, the conductor Guido Ermanno Usigli, acted as president of the artist agency, *Cooperativa Artistica dei Grandi Spettacoli Lirici*.

Many of these key figures were also leaders of Venetian religious and philanthropic organisations, and champions of both clerical and anticlerical groups, particularly of youth organisations who often lobbied the management for favours to use its facilities including the *Sala Apollinaire* for meetings and conferences or the main theatre for benefit events. The records of the meetings of the members, *Processi Verbali del Convocazione della Assemblea della Societá* (PVCAS), as well as enabling an analysis of the voting record of individual box holders, demonstrates the alliances between individuals and families with similar political and religious convictions through the minutes of meetings and the record of proxy votes given by absent boxholders, or by women boxholders who were excluded from attending by the constitution of the Society.[589] For example, Pacifico Ceresa, on occasion, gave his proxy to the conservative aristocrat Filippo Nani Mocenigo, a boxholder who later wrote the first short chronology of the history of La Fenice during the nineteenth century.[590]

[589] ASTF, 63, PVCAS 1903-1909, Fasc 473 10 June 1905, Copy of Constitution of the Fenice Society, Art 17: “Female boxholders wanting to participate at the Assembly must be authorised by their husband according to article 134 of the Civil Code. She can be represented by her husband (as long as not legally separated), her father or adult son…” "Le Signore proprietarie di palchi, se intervengono alle assemblee devono essere autorizzate dal marito a fare quegli atti pei quali è richiesta l'autorizzazione di cui all'art. 134 Cod.Civ. Il marito non legalmente separato dalla moglie, e il di lei padre od il figlio maggiorenne la rappresentano…”.

[590] ASTV, PVCAS, 62, 1896-1903, Fasc.441, 17.07.99; Mario Nani Mocenigo, *Il Teatro La Fenice: note storiche e artistiche* (Venezia: Industrie Poligrafiche Venete, 1926).

Fig. 47 Mausoleum of Fenice member Pacifico Ceresa, Cimitero di San Michele, Venice.[591]

Mocenigo was also the (Catholic) President of the Congress of the *Opere Pie*, on whose behalf he petitioned the directors of the theatre for use of its facilities in August 1900, mentioning Filippo Grimani's status as Honorary President.[592] While this request was granted, it inevitably prompted other similar requests, notably from the President of the *Second National Congress for Female Education and Elementary Schoolmistresses*, who was Antonio Fradeletto, Director of the Biennale. While Fradeletto had forged a strong relationship with the conservative Grimani, he remained close to Selvatico as well as Molmenti. His letter to the Directors of the Fenice cited their granting of the favour to the *Opere Pie* conference. Debate among the Fenice members present to consider the request on 23 July 1901 was led by opposition to the request from Grassini, Benedetto Sullam and Nicolò Papadopoli,

[591] The Pacifico Ceresa monument on the cemetery island of San Michele in Venice is perhaps the largest and most theatrical on the island, the work of sculptor Emilio Marsili (who participated in the first 1895 International Exhibition. Both in scale and conception it suggests not only Ceresa's wealth, derived from the chemical industry, but also the intensity of his religious devotion, and a certain theatrical ostentatiousness in the figure of 'Il *Dolore*', 'Suffering', who towers over Ceresa's tomb.

[592] ASTF, PVCAS, 62, 1896-1903, Fasc .443, Mocenigo to Direzione Teatro La Fenice (DTF), 10 August 1900.

and the request was rejected without a vote after receiving little support in discussion.[593] This is an indication of the balance of opinion among the boxholders regarding religion and public morality under the Grimani administration.

The main area of dispute with the city council was justifying a financial contribution and the moral benefits of opera at the Fenice.[594] In April 1888, under the Moderate *giunta* of Dante di Serego Alighieri, the Fenice's supporters in the *Consiglio Comunale* clashed with opponents of a municipal subsidy when the Fenice directors requested L60,000 annually for three years to present a season of 40 to 45 performances of "opera-ballo e ballo grande". The *Giunta* responded with an offer of L50,000 for one season, which argued that opening the theatre would support workers' families, and provide "a source of education, wellbeing and vitality… from which will come moral and material benefits".[595] The debate on this motion set out the battle lines between supporters and opponents of a subsidy which would recur almost annually over the following fifteen years. At this point, the Fenice's opponents were spread between both clerical conservatives including Antonio Saccardo and Paganuzzi, and radical liberals like Paolo Clementini - with the proponents of the subsidy seen as self-serving boxholders of the theatre – particularly *Assessore* Ludovico Valmarana, whose brother Giuseppe was currently Fenice President, proposing the motion. Saccardo led the charge against subsidising the rich Fenice members, questioning why, if it was an educational proposal, the *Assessore* for public instruction, Tiepolo, wasn't putting the motion himself. He suggested the theatre should be perfectly able to finance a season through its own means, if it were to drop the expense of ballets, or "prostitution which is ballet".[596]

Senator Fornoni rebutted these criticisms suggesting that opening Venice's *teatro massimo*, which produced the masterpieces of art ("capolavori d'arte") would improve the spirit of Venetian youth, and steer them away from morally dubious

[593] ASTF, PVCAS, 62, 1896-1903, Fasc. 449, Fradeletto to DTF, 12.7.01; Seduta 23.07.01.
[594] See John Rosselli, 'Italy: The Decline of a Tradition,' in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Late Romantic Era from the mid nineteenth century to World War I* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) pp. 126-150; Toelle, 'Venice and its opera house', pp. 34-35.
[595] "… una fonte di educazione, di benessere e vitalità… da cui derivono… vantaggi morali e materiali". ASCV, ACC, 21 April 1888,
[596] "[il] lenocinio del ballo". ASCV, ACC, 21 April 1888.

operettas ("ben poco morali delle operette"). The previous year had seen the first *Esposizione* for which the Council had provided a small subsidy for staging Verdi's *Otello*, which Fornoni insisted had been the best use of public funds during the exhibition. He was supported by Giambattista Ruffini, who suggested also that the squalour of the streets in Venice would be ameliorated by opening the theatre. Saccardo responded that a short season at the Fenice would neither solve the problem of sanitation, nor prevent youths visiting the operetta. Clementini was equally concerned about using taxes to reimburse the Fenice when he and others wanted to abolish taxes on ordinary families. The Giunta's proposal was carried by 31 votes to 17.[597] The debate was taken up in the Venetian press with *La Difesa* summing up the discussion between the moderate Giunta's mouthpiece, *La Gazzetta*, supporting the subsidy, and the anticlerical *L'Adriatico* supporting the clerical camp's own opposition to subsidising the rich "consiglieri palchisti".[598]

Following the elections of November 1889, Tiepolo's own support for the Fenice subsidy became a subject of dissent between him and the now more radical Giunta, contributing to Tiepolo's resignation in April 1890 and his replacement by Riccardo Selvatico.[599] With the radicals now holding the whip hand, Fornoni and his allies struggled when debating a further request by the theatre in June, to counter the arguments of Sebastiano Tecchio. Speaking for the Giunta, he insisted that the rich *palchisti* should contribute more, and that the Council could not afford to subsidise an activity which benefited them more than the general good – either by bringing in tourists and income, which he doubted, or by attracting the lower classes, who were more likely to visit the Malibran which also produced opera.[600] Tecchio also suggested that were the Council in a financially better position he would prefer to fund the new Venice conservatoire, the Liceo Benedetto Marcello, to support the mass of local musicians, rather than waste money on foreign singers and ballerinas. Fornoni claimed that the Fenice stalls and gallery were now often better attended than the private boxes, and that, out of 134 boxes, only 60 were now privately owned, which was too small a number to support the whole theatre. Better, he

[597] ASCV, ACC, 21 April 1888.
[598] *La Difesa*, 23-24 April 1888; *La Gazzetta*, 22 April 1888.
[599] *La Difesa*, 9 April 1890; Luciano Pomoni, 'L'Ascesa…' p. 103.
[600] ASCV, ACC, 13 June 1890.

suggested that young people could come to the Fenice, than go to see operetta or visit the *Café Chantant*, which attracted people “no better than tramps”. Nevertheless, L60,000 a year went to the mass of 580 theatre workers and musicians, excluding the top ballerinas who came from outside Venice. Valmarana also suggested that the proposal was in line with the new Mayor's own programme to rejuvenate the city. Assessore Clementini concluded that the Council simply could not afford the expense because its financial position had worsened since the previous year, compounded by an epidemic. Tiepolo's dissent from his former colleagues was demonstrated by his vote in support of the Fenice, though it was to little avail, as the Giunta's proposal to decline the request was passed by 32 to 17 votes.[601] The vote, according to the liberal newspaper, *La Gazzetta*, represented “il trionfo della volgarità”, and published the detailed list of spending on the orchestral and choral forces supported by the theatre, presumably provided by the Fenice directors.[602] This heralded a period of several irregular seasons. The Fenice managed only a short run of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, opening on 24 January 1891, followed by Rossini's La *Cenerentola* in the summer.[603] 1891-2 saw a fuller *Carnevale/Quaresima* season including the successful Venetian premiere of Franchetti's *Asrael*, a revival of *Otello* and *L'Africana* by Meyerbeer. A short Lenten season followed in 1893, presented by Sonzogno, which included the local premiere of Saint-Säens' *Sansone e Dalilia*.

The failure of the theatre to mount any season itself in 1893-1894 led the *Società Filarmonica Giuseppe Verdi* (SFGV), which had been founded in Venice only the year before, to take matters into its own hands. They contracted to rent the theatre to stage the first Venetian performances of Berlioz's *La Dannazione di Faust*.[604] The initiative was warmly welcomed in the Venetian press both for raising the profile of Venetian musicianship, for including amateur singers in the chorus, bringing the forces to two hundred, including 120 choristers, and for generally supporting local

[601] ASCV, ACC, 13 June 1890; La Difesa, 14-15 June 1890.
[602] *La Gazzetta*, 14 June 1890.
[603] I discuss the unusual pairing for *Cavalleria* below.
[604] *La Dannazione di Faust* had received its Italian premiere, billed as a *leggenda drammatica,* in 1887 in Rome, followed by the Teatro dal Verme in Milan in 1982 and in Florence in 1894.

musicians during the current closure of the Fenice.[605] *La Gazzetta* listed all the amateur singers taking part.[606] Selvatico's administration was even persuaded to contribute L2,500 towards the upfront costs of the performances because of the economic hardship of the previous winter.[607] The new regime had made clear that with the new Exhibition, funding opera at the Fenice was not a priority.[608] In December 1894, with the Fenice still unable to finance its own Carnival season, Councillor Ugo Gregoretti, supported by Grimani, tried once again to persuade his peers to support the theatre. Selvatico brushed the request aside, citing the expenses of the Exhibition as the Comune's main concern.[609] Returning to the question the following January, the Catholic conservative Vanzetti argued that the theatre should be subsidised to open for the exhibition, both to ensure the best attractions for visitors, and to support local musicians, and Selvatico agreed at least to debate the question.[610] Finally in March, he agreed to a subsidy of L15,000 for a Spring season which would be conducted by a young Toscanini, and included a revival of *Falstaff* and Puccini's *Le Villi.* However, it came at a price as the Giunta insisted on appointing a Commission to oversee the project and protect their interests which included Vanzetti and two other Councillors.[611] As Toelle points out, this started a process of compromising the independence of the Fenice Society, even though the subsidy represented a much smaller contribution than the L50,000 which the theatre had received in earlier years.[612]

The change of municipal regime following the elections of July 1895, and the trouncing of the *progressisti* by the clerico-moderate alliance, ostensibly strengthened the position of the theatre's supporters, with its most prominent conservative boxholders elected at the top of the ballot, particularly Fornoni, Ceresa, Grimani, Vanzetti, Nani Mocenigo, Nicolò Papadopoli and Ravà.[613] As Mayor Grimani approached the question of subsidies for the theatre with caution and

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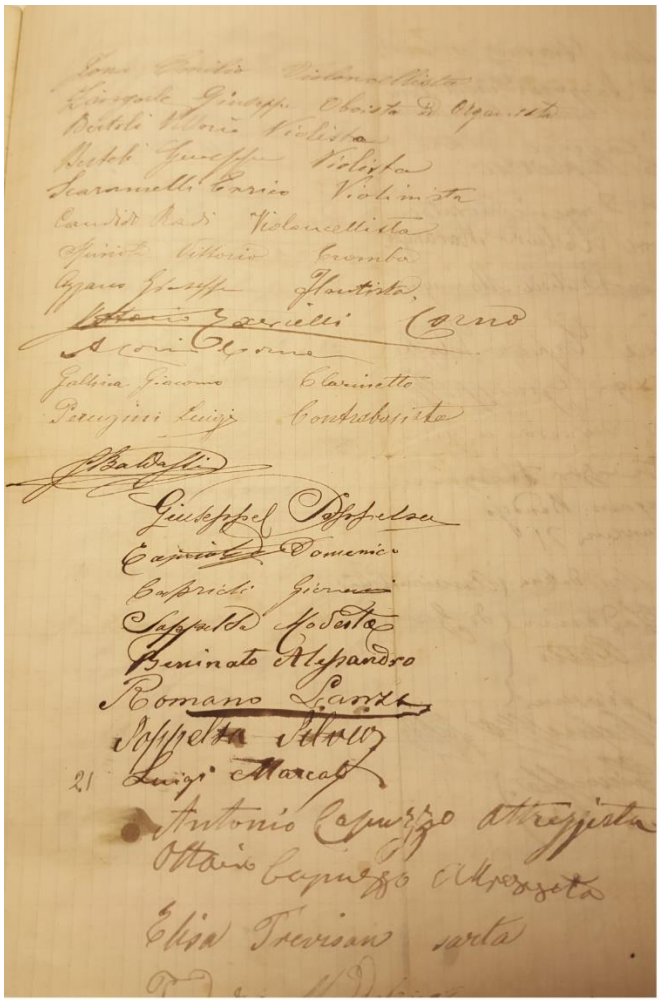
[605] *La Gazzetta*, 21 March, 29 March 1894,
[606] *La Gazzetta*, 13 April 1894.
[607] ASCV, ACC, 8 April 1896.
[608] ASCV, ACC 13 June 1890.
[609] *La Gazzetta*, 22 December 1894.
[610] ASCV, ACC, 26 January 1895.
[611] ASTF, Spettacoli 1893-1897, 480, Selvatico to DTF, 31 March 1895.
[612] Toelle, 'Venice and its Opera House', p. 51.
[613] Barizza, *Il Comune di Venezia*, p. 55.

diplomacy, given his interest as boxholder, initially citing the continuing budgetary pressures and economic hardship as inauspicious reasons for debating the question, rebuffing a call from Vanzetti to insert a subsidy of at least 35,000 into the Fenice budget for 1896.[614] In March 1896 the Verdi Society presented a proposal to the *Comune* for a subsidy of L5,000, and to the theatre for permission, to perform Gounod's oratorio *La Redenzione* (*La Rédemption*), citing the success of the Berlioz performances in 1894, the parlous financial state of the economy and workers, and the potential boon from producing a similar large-scale choral work.[615] Grimani proposed a subsidy of L4,000 to the *Consiglio Comunale*, where he was opposed by Selvatico and Tecchio, despite them having supported the Berlioz performances, as well as others like Emilio Castellani who thought an oratorio could be more cheaply staged in the hall of the Liceo Benedetto Marcello rather than the Fenice. Grimani prevailed, and it is not clear why the performances, in the end, did not take place.[616]

By the end of the summer, economic hardship stimulated a petition signed by dozens of workers and businessmen from instrumental musicians and choristers, to florists and hoteliers, tailors, prop and wig-makers, pleading Grimani to persuade the Council to support a winter season at the Fenice. This is a fascinating document underlining the importance of the theatre socially and economically, which challenged directly the scepticism among some political opponents of the theatre of the Fenice's contribution to the city beyond the luxury of its owners and imported artists. The signatories also reversed the arguments made in the Council that the Fenice would be better opening in the Spring to coincide with the new exhibition and the general increase in visitors, saying that 1896 had been a disastrous summer and that the real need was during the winter.[617]

[614] ASCV, ACC, 30 December 1895.
[615] ASCV, 1895-1899, XI.2.2, 15 March 1896; ASTF, PVCA 61, 1890-1896, b.62.fasc 429, 9 April 1896.
[616] ASCV, ACC, 8 April 1896.
[617] ASCV, 1895-1899, XI.2.2, Commissione del SGV, dated August 1896.

Fig. 48 Extract from Petition from Società Giuseppe Verdi to the Mayor of Venice.[618]


Violista
Violinista
Violoncellista
Violinista
Violinista
Violin

But the prospect of the second Biennale provided a target which Grimani suggested would be more realistic than the coming winter season.[619] Grimani now became more active in meetings of the Fenice Assembly to cajole the boxholders into reducing the costs of opening the theatre and making all boxes available to the impresario to increase his potential profit margin, and promoting sales of boxes to new members to reduce the burden on existing *palchisti*. Otherwise, Grimani argued, seemingly to provoke, they should accept that the Fenice consider itself no longer a *teatro massimo* but operate on an inferior level.[620] Despite some grumblings, particularly from the Papadopoli brothers, these proposals were approved at their meeting in February 1897.[621] Infused with the enthusiasm of new boxholders, and perhaps to honour the memory of Fornoni, who died in July 1897, the Fenice Society resolved to come to an agreement with the Comune to open the theatre for the winter season.[622] In August 1897 Grimani urged them "speaking not as Mayor but as a member of the Convocation of the theatre…" to agree a budget and contract with an impresario, and to proceed more cautiously with the Council than many other boxholders wanted, by accepting a smaller subsidy of only 15,000 towards a winter season.[623] Grimani accepted a proposal from Gregoretti expand the role of the municipal commission to oversee the negotiation of each season in return for a subsidy of just L15,000.[624] This represented a further significant increase in political control of the theatre and continued into the first decade of the twentieth century, and began to make the question of choosing repertoire, and the social purpose of opera, intensely political.

However, it did usher in a period of stability in which the Fenice was able to present both Carnival and either Lent, Spring or Summer seasons until the end of 1900-1901. By 1900 Grimani felt more confident to eke out a slightly higher subsidy for the theatre of L20,000, but with the requirement that municipal commission would have equal rights to approve a contract with the impresa, including the choice of repertoire

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[619] ASCV, ACC, 14 August 1896.
[620] "il teatro dovrà scendere a livello inferiore, ma purtroppo, necessario". ASTF, PVCAS, 61, fasc.431, 20 January 1897.
[621] ASTF, PVCAS, 61, fasc.433, 21 February 1897.
[622] ASTF, PVCAS, 61, fasc. 434, 11 July 1897.
[623] ASTF, PVCAS, 61, fasc. 435, 21 August 1897.
[624] ASCV, ACC, 17 August 1897, Gregoretti: "e a fatti compiuti ha dovuto constatare esser stato disgraziamente profeta."

and artists.[625] Invitations to impresarios to submit proposals were published jointly by the theatre and the Commission, for example in 1901 stipulating: three operas – "one Verdi, one Wagner and one modern repertoire, for example *Asrael* or *Tosca*".[626]

It also implicated the Comune in judgements about the quality of performance. The 1900-1901 season was considered a failure, particularly the production of *La Traviata* which was staged for the Biennale as a commemoration of the death of Verdi that January. Grimani had to concede that since the subsidy had been introduced, "certainly the results in the last season weren't brilliant compared to those of 97-98, following which there has been a steady decline."[627] Whether this verdict reflected the theatre spreading resources too thinly, or poor choices in terms of impresarios is not clear. But he argued strongly that the Comune had a responsibility to support music, both on economic grounds, the prestige it brought to the city and for the educational value to both musicians, students and the general population. Bordiga, the pedagogue and anticlerical scourge of the previous administration, countered that he saw little educative value in these performances:

> and to illustrate this it is enough to see the behaviour of the public at the Fenice and the way in which they listen to the music. You can't witness it or tolerate their lack of attention, these people who have come to listen, thus disturbing *the religion of art* which should reign in this atmosphere which becomes instead a literary meeting, a salon entertainment.
>
> If the Comune wants to put on opera which is really educative and instructive, it should start to subsidise the teatro Malibran, where I go more frequently, where they put on risqué shows. Or otherwise at the Rossini which is

[625] ASTF, Spettacoli 482, Fasc. Stagione 1900-1901, Grimani to DTF, 2 August 1900, "una Commissione con facoltà pari a quella della Direzione del Teatro con l'incarico di trattare e decidere il programma degli spettacoli, la scelta degli artisti, del Direttore d'orchestra e delle masse corali ed orchestrali e di assicurare in ogni sua parte il buon andamento della Stagione che dovrà comprendere anche alcune recite popolari".
[626] ASTV, Spettacoli 1900-1903, 482, Direzione della Fenice e La Commissione Municipale to Impresi, 'Avviso di Concorso' 28 June 1901, "repertorio moderno: [per esempio] Asrael/Tosca".
[627] "Certo non furono brillanti i risultati dell' ultima stagione e… a quelli fortunati del 1897-1898 seguì una progressiva decadenza". ASCV, ACC, 20 June 1901,

> attended by a less wealthy class of people who are usually well behaved and thus benefit in terms of education and learning.[628]

What is particularly striking about this statement is the pronounced Wagnerian image of the 'religion of art'. It also speaks to the conflicting contemporary and scholarly interpretations of the behaviour and psychology of opera audiences through the nineteenth century. Although coming from a progressive perspective, we will see that this sacralising of opera and its mission gradually absorbed both secular and Catholic opinion about opera.

The agreement for 1901-2 season foundered on the still-inadequate commission for the impresario when Piontelli withdrew.[629] Though the Fenice would never again receive a subsidy for its main season (until it was created an *ente autonomo* under the Fascist regime), boxholders did not quite give up looking for a greater share of responsibility with the Comune, with a group of clerico-moderate Councillors (Giacomo Levi, Grassini and Nicolò Papadopoli) proposing another initiative in 1903.[630] The following years were a period of consolidation and strengthening of the Fenice's resources and repertoire, with the Directors reporting that the market for opera was more favourable, and seeking to attract better proposals from impresarios and secure a music director of the first rank for a three-year contract.[631] Grimani did manage to ensure that the Comune supported Spring seasons for the Biennale throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Following *Werther* in 1897, there came *Mefistofele* in 1899, *La Traviata* in 1901, *Il Trovatore* and *Il Santo* in 1903, the world premiere of Wolf-Ferrari's cantata *La Vita Nuova* (taking its text from Dante) in 1905. In 1907 came Mascagni's *Amica*, and Strauss's *Salome* in 1909. In 1910, when the Biennale changed its scheduling, the Fenice mounted just acts III and IV of Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell*. In 1912 it produced *Norma*, and *Parsifal* in 1914. For these occasions the theatre usually attempted to offer the Comune an artistically significant project, which would be worthy of the status of the Biennale, be appropriate for gala performances which always included a royal gala and sometimes additional ones for

[628] ASCV, ACC, 20 June 1901. (See Appendix 1 Source 20)
[629] ASTF, PVCAS, 61, fasc.451, 22 December 1901.
[630] ASTF, PVCAS 63, Fasc. 461 - Documenti pella seduta 18.6.03.
[631] ASTF, PVCAS, 63. Fasc.491, DTF to the boxholders, 25 February 1908,

foreign military and naval detachments. Though these subsidies were usually approved as part of the budget for the Biennale without debate, there was residual protest from the left. For example, in 1906, Elia Musatti, one of the first Councillors elected from group of Revolutionary Socialists in 1905, tried, unsuccessfully, to have the contribution to the Fenice from the Biennale budget removed, saying that opera was of no utility to the city.[632]

The opportunity to premiere *Parsifal* in 1914 was clearly seen by the Fenice directors as leverage in securing the best subsidy possible for the Spring 1914 season to coincide with the Biennale. Staging *Parsifal* alongside the first revival of Verdi's *Falstaff* since 1895, represented a quality which had rarely been seen in one short season at the Fenice. The cost of mounting the work would involve modifications to the orchestra pit, stage and machinery, as well as the expense of the production itself.[633] The press was particularly concerned that the Comune should be supporting discounted performances ('*recite popolari*') for *Parsifal*, so that ordinary Venetians should be able to see such an important work. These were not scheduled when the *cartellone* was published for the season, but one was eventually included as the tenth performance on 7 May.[634] As I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, the Venetian *Parsifal* would represent the culmination of a process which had started with an identity crisis for the Fenice and opera as the city was wracked by the culture wars of the 1890s. Through this testing crucible, the perception of opera evolved from a melodramatic, frivolous and sometimes scandalous pastime of the wealthy to re-establish itself as a primary vehicle for the promotion of the city's identity nationally and internationally, as well as a morally uplifting force, a purpose recognised by both the secular, progressive faction and Catholic-conservative opinion. This was achieved partly through a developing repertoire which increasingly privileged a range of operatic genres and scenarios which focused on sacred, mysterious and transcendental themes.

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[632] ASCV, ACC, 22 December 1906.
[633] Girardi, 'Fiat Lux' in Teatro La Fenice 1796-1915; Franco Rossi, 'Del archivio storico del Teatro La Fenice Parsifal 1914: in pubblico dominio', Teatro La Fenice, *Parsifal programme*, pp.163-171; ASTF, PVCAS, 65, 1912-1920, Fasc.520, 12 January 1914.
[634] *La Gazzetta*, 5 April 1914; 6 May 1914.

Religion in the evolution of opera's status in Venice

As we have seen, religion was the major fault-line in Venetian municipal politics and society, and this impacted on the administration and policing of art and culture from literature and drama to the visual arts, music and opera. Venice played an important role in the movement of sacred revivalism in music, which, as Laura Basini has pointed out, fuelled an interest in antique liturgical styles and forms from the period of Verdi's *Messa di Reqiuem* onwards.[635] The Caecilian movement sought to regulate and cultivate a greater distinction between appropriate liturgical styles and the 'sensualism' of the theatre, but the attractions of classical and mediaeval tropes were part of a broader cultural turn to the ancient to inspire new forms of idealism. The phenomenon of performing the *Messa di Requiem* in opera houses also marked a significant episode in a broader process of sacralisation of the aural and visual experience of visiting the theatre, for which the model was Wagner's Bayreuth Festival, where the Festspielhaus was inaugurated the year following the premiere of the Verdi *Messa di Requiem*, and which fascinated Italian composers, artists and intellectuals, even if their understanding of Wagner's methods and intent remained obscure or learned second hand.[636] The Italian premiere of Verdi's *Requiem* took place in the Teatro Malibran in July 1875. However, the first performance of a Requiem Mass in a Venetian theatre pre-dated the Verdi work by four years, and has hitherto been overlooked by scholars. In April 1871, the parts of a *Messa di Requiem* by the recently deceased local composer Antonio Buzzolla (1815-1871), were performed in La Fenice, promoted by friends including conductor Domenico Acerbi, and the family of Buzzolla, to raise funds to purchase his manuscripts, and to support his children.[637] Buzzolla had written the work in 1846 for performance in St Mark's Basilica, and it had contributed two movements towards the proposed Rossini centenary memorial for which Verdi's setting was also conceived. Ironically, the choice of the theatre was, according to the clerical mouthpiece *Il Veneto Cattolico*, prompted by a refusal of permission to performance the work in St Mark's Basilica where it had originally been given in a liturgical setting, or not to "transform the

[635] Basini, Laura, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism in Post-Unification Italy', *19th Century Music*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2004) pp. 133-159.
[636] Basini, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism' p. 137, n. 9.
[637] A Requiem Mass is traditionally said to mark thirty days after a death.

Church into a theatre ("non potersi permettere di mutar la Chiesa in teatro"). Instead, his admirers had decided, on Wednesday of Holy Week, to “transform the theatre into a Church” ("mutar il teatro in Chiesa"), which even *Il Veneto Cattolico* received rather cheerfully with the conclusion, “Not a bad idea! Certainly Buzzolla wouldn’t have expected this”.[638]

The performance itself was reported by *La Gazzetta* in fulsome terms with details of all the eminent local singers and orchestral players from the Fenice and the chapel of St Mark’s who took part. The orchestra was placed on the stage with an enormous bust of Buzzolla. Teresa Stoltz, currently singing at the Fenice was the soprano soloist, and sang the ‘Recordare Gesù’ “with such a perfectly pure religious tone” ("[con] tanto perfetta austerità di stile religioso"). The audience, however, received the performance coldly, attributed by *La Gazzetta*, not to the standard of the music, but rather:

> the contrast between the solemn occasion and the stage, where the day before the audience had been watching rather raunchy dancing, and between the idea of religious music, whose inspiration and power come from a higher source, and music which you usually hear in the theatre which imitates religious feeling, which you can't help finding jarring.[639]

Four years later, with the precedent set of a patriotic and culturally unifying Venetian performance of a Requiem Mass in a theatre, Venice naturally rallied even more energetically to a Verdian premiere in the Malibran, the preparations and execution of which were detailed on an almost daily basis in *La Gazzetta*, though curiously ignored entirely by *Il Veneto Cattolico*. Mayor Fornoni, wrote to Verdi in Vienna, inviting him to attend, to which Verdi politely declined citing important business awaiting him at home on his return from the Austrian capital.[640] Stolz's arrival to sing was heralded in the press, and the reports which greeted the most important theatrical events in Venice, of inflated prices for rooms and official warnings about

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[638] *Il Veneto Cattolico*, 3 April 1871; *La Gazzetta*, 5 April 1871, "Non c'è male! Questa non se l'avrebbe certo aspettata il Buzzolla".
[639] *La Gazzetta*, 6 April 1871. (See Appendix 1 Source 21)
[640] La Gazzetta, 30 June, 10 July 1875.

gondola congestion, only increased the anticipation. *La Gazzetta* also announced that the text of the Mass would be available in both Latin and Italian.

Arguments raged about whether Verdi's *Requiem* had been emptied of its religious content. The critic whose epigraph in *La Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* Basini quotes anonymously clearly appreciated its spiritual significance. The critic was, in fact, the Venetian Pietro Faustini who wrote for both Ricordi's periodical and reported on the Malibran performances for *La Gazzetta*. He was a boxholder at the Fenice and from 1893-1903 Secretary of the theatre's Assembly.[641] His published reviews and articles on the Malibran performances were brought together and published in one volume in 1875 by Ricordi. According to Faustini:

> what an abundance of dramatic power, which without ceasing to be sacred, shakes you, transports you and frightens you. In a word, it is a Mass dramatized through the elevated and noble meaning of the text.[642]

The scenery for the Malibran 'staging' of the *Requiem* was designed by Pietro Bertoja, who would go on the following year to design the successful third version of Boito's *Mefistofele* at the Fenice, including its radically innovative staging for the Prologue in Heaven which was discussed earlier. The *Requiem* design also re-created a very specifically Venetian architectural style, "un tempio nel stilo italo-bizantino", of which the apotheosis, Venetians might argue, was the Basilica of St Mark's itself. Furthermore, the disposition of the choir attempted, within the limited width of the Malibran's proscenium arch, to mimic that of Santa Maria dei Frari, so the imagery presented was not an idealised or imaginary church interior but a collage of specific local religious references.[643] This has an interesting echo of both the original conception of the grail hall in *Parsifal* drawn from Siena Cathedral, and

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[641] Pietro Faustini, Memorie storiche ed artistiche sul Teatro La Fenice (Venice: Antonio Orlandini, 1902); ASTF, PVCAS, 62&63; Girardi and Rossi, *Il Teatro La Fenice*, pp. 293-307.
[642] *La Gazzetta Musicale di Milano,* 8 July 1875, quoted in Faustini, Pietro, Il Requiem del maestro Giuseppe Verdi a Venezia al teatro Malibran, nel luglio 1875, Milan 1875, "trovi a piene mani quel drammatico potente che, non cessando di esser sacro, ti scuote, ti trasporta, ti spaventa. In una parola ì una Messa drammatizzata nel più alto e nobile significato della parola".
[643] *La Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, no. 28, 08 July 1875.

Adolfo Hohenstein's design for Act I of *Tosca* in Sant' Andrea della Valle, suggesting another manifestation of the 'verist' impulse in opera staging.

Above the Malibran's proscenium were displayed, wreathed in laurels, the names of some of Verdi's most popular operas in the immediate post-Unification period - *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Traviata* (the third of these premiered at the Fenice in 1851). However, Faustini's interests ranged more broadly than Verdi alone. He concluded rhetorically, "who would ever have thought that on the stage of the Malibran we would see works of the quality of *Roberto il Diavolo*, *Faust*, Verdi's *Messa di Requiem* and *Aida*?"[644] Significantly, these are three operas with very different prominent religious themes, cited alongside the *Requiem* as returning the Malibran to something like its glory days of the 1810s and 1820s after decades of decline. Faustini reviewed in detail each performance at the Malibran, no doubt encouraged by Ricordi, with even the box office takings for the three performances being revealed, "*Lire sessantamila-centosessantacinque e centesimi quindici!"* (L60,165.15) - enough to go a long way towards financing a whole season of opera.[645]

Twenty years following the Malibran premiere of the Verdi *Reqiuem,* another musical fashion erupted which speaks to both the further evolution of the permeability between liturgical and dramatic settings and modes of experience. With almost the same level of international sensation that Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* stormed Italian and global theatres in 1890, in the last years of the century, the European fashion for dramatic, religious oratorios was given an Italian champion in the works of Lorenzo Perosi, Maestro of the Capella Marciana in Venice from 1894-1898.[646] His popularity famously led Mascagni to comment to Puccini, "If this one starts writing operas we're toast". [647] He was lauded by musicians and writers from Romain

[644] *La Gazzetta*, 20 July 1876. Quoted in Giorgio Mangini, 'Non Piaceri Spirituali, ma emozioni del cuore: Il Teatro di San Giovanni Grisostomo-Malibran nell'età contemporanea' in Biggi and Mangini, *Teatro Malibran*, p. 96,
[645] *La Gazzetta*, 16 July 1875 (Original italics preserved).
[646] Perosi was piedmontese by birth, a native of Tortona.
[647] 'Il genio, le battute, la vita quotidiana e i vezzi di Lorenzo Perosi nelle memorie di Arcangelo Paglialunga', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 12 January 2008. ("Se questo comincia a scrivere opere siamo fritti".)

Rolland to Toscanini. Even D'Annunzio wanted to collaborate with him.[648] Perosi demurred from the clamour for him to turn to lyric opera, declaring his determination to compose only religious works. As a church musician Perosi was at the heart of the Caecilian reforms mandated by his patron, Cardinal Sarto, Pope Pius X from 1903.[649] Sarto reinforced the precepts of sacred music in a liturgical setting and some of the social restrictions, for example banning women from singing in church choirs. In one of his first pastoral letters as Patriarch he wrote on sacred music:

> The Church has consistently condemned in sacred music, everything which is superficial, vulgar, trivial and risible, all that is secular and theatrical in the form of composition and style…[650]

By this point the Catholic revival had overcome previous resistance to promoting religious oratorios and the Church welcomed Perosi's fame and popularity enthusiastically. Understandably Perosi was championed by the Catholic *La Difesa* and its editor Francesco Saccardo. Preparation, rehearsal and performance of Perosi oratorios in Venice and beyond were detailed almost daily during 1898 and 1899, the text printed in full and long articles considering critical commentary on the priest-composer's music and its dramatic, classical and modernist qualities. This was a level of coverage for a composer in any Venetian newspaper matched only by premieres of Wagner operas.

Perosi's oratorios married the Romantic scale and harmonic language of Berlioz and Wagner with the classicism of older styles of oratorio writing, including Bach, but also infusing them with Gregorian chant.[651] His subject matter, the passion and

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[648] Graziella Merlatti, *Lorenzo Perosi: Una vita tra genio e follia* (Milan: Ancora, 2006) p. 7.
[649] On Perosi's role in the Caecilian movement see Adriano Bassi, *Lorenzo Perosi: l' uomo, il compositore, il religioso* (Fasano di Brindisi: Schena editore, 1994) pp. 215-221.
[650] "La Chiesa ha costantemente condannato tutto ciò, che nella musica sacra è leggero, volgare, triviale e ridicolo tutto ciò che è profano e teatrale sia nella forma della composizione, sia nel modo, con cui essa viene proposta dagli esecutori: *sancta sancte*. " Giuseppe Cardinal Sarto, *Le Pastorali del periodo veneziano 1894-98* (vol.2) pp. 66-74, 1 May 1895, 'Musica Sacra'.
[651] For a musical analysis of the oratorios see Bassi, *Lorenzo Perosi*, pp. 91-105; Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio vol. 4: The Oratorio in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) pp. 619-622; Arnold Schering, *Geschichte des Oratoriums* (Leipzig, 1911) pp. 604-607.

transfiguration of Christ, universal judgement and resurrection, all tended towards the mystical and transcendental, much nearer to the treatment of such themes by Wagner than earlier composers of oratorio. Perosi himself had said that after listening to the *Ring Cycle* and *Parsifal* one could not compose anything further.[652] However, his depictions of religiosity could also be more humanistic, for example the characters of Marta and Maria in *La Risurezzione di Lazzaro*, provided a portrait of two women far more sensitive than most operas of this period.[653] Many critics felt the theatre was the natural home for his dramatic style.[654]

In 1898 La Fenice, with full support from Sindaco Grimani, gave premières of two Perosi oratorios as a special summer season, *La Trasfigurazione di nostro Signore Gesù Cristo* and *La Risurrezione di Lazzaro*. The audience at the premiere of *Lazzaro* applauded so noisily that Perosi had to ask for silence. Although Perosi was supported by *La Difesa*, some Catholics viewed the performance of a religious oratorio, whether liturgical or not, in a theatre as an abomination “where the prima donnas sing for society, *the filthy seductresses* of *La Bohème*”.[655] Their success was such that a third, *La risurrezione di Cristo*, was inserted the following spring season during the Biennale alongside operas with significant, but strikingly different religious settings, Boito's *Mefistofele* and *Sansone et Dalila* by Saint-Saëns.[656] If anything the response to *Cristo* at the Fenice was even warmer than its predecessors, and, interestingly, performances were scheduled for Holy Week, including one on Easter Sunday.[657]

On a civic level, Perosi's importance in Venice laid bare once again the religious divide still animating Venetian politics. In 1898 Giovanni Castellani, one of the two

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[652] Bassi, *Lorenzo Perosi*, p. 254.
[653] Merlatti, *Lorenzo Perosi*, p. 69.
[654] For example the critic of *Lega Lombarda*, quoted in Ibid., pp. 139-140, "Lorenzo Perosi coi suoi primi oratorii… la domanda se l'ingegno del Perosi non avrebbe trovato il suo campo naturale nel teatro".
[655] "là dove si erano cantate le eleganti, *'seducenti porcherie'* della *Bohème*." Ibid., p. 67.
[656] Girardi and Rossi, 'La Cronologia', p. 512; in Bologna the reception for *Cristo* at the Teatro Comunale was equally strong, and the audience's approbation was led by Cardinal Svampa, suggesting once again that ecclesiastical opinion on the propriety of theatrical performances of dramatic oratorios and their attendance by clerics was still highly variable. *La Difesa*, 17-18 April 1899.
[657] *La Difesa*, 28-29 March 1899.

Councillors appointed to the Commission overseeing the Fenice's season, proposed to the Consiglio Comunale that the City officially honour the priest-composer. This prompted Selvatico to complain that such an honour for Perosi could not be justified because he was not Venetian. Grimani himself spoke in favour of the honour, while it was pointed out by Councillor Ciano that a similar gesture had been made the previous year to the (Lombard) actress Eleonore Duse, whom Selvatico greatly admired and corresponded with, and who obviously inhabited a dramatic world with which the poet and playwright was far more comfortable than the opera house.[658] His Catholic supporters, on the other hand, saw Perosi as rescuing the theatre from modern tendencies. As La Difesa opined in a long preview of his *Lazzaro*:

> Perosi, you have reclaimed before the public the divine Figure of Christ, you have shown us God in this miracle, and man on earth, accompanied by the most tender melodies. You have given a sermon more sublime than words alone! It isn't therefore incongruous to have the figure of Christ in the theatre; the Passion and the Mysteries were the beginnings of the theatre which is now degenerate.[659]

[658] *L'Adriatico*, 10 August 1898; *La Difesa*, 10 August 1898; ASCV, ACC, 09 August 1898; see for example Maria Giovanna Siet Casagrande, 'L' Archivio Privato Selvatico' in Agostini, *Venezia nell'età di Riccardo Selvatico*, p. 359. Duse was born in Vigevano in Lombardia in 1858, so technically it might be argued she was born in the same Austrian province as Venice, Venetia-Lombardia.

[659] *La Difesa*, 28-29 July 1898. (Signed a.g.) (See Appendix 1 Source 22)

Fig. 49 Lorenzo Perosi, *La Difesa*, 28-29 July 1898

LA "RISURREZIONE DI LAZZARO,,

DEL MAESTRO DON LORENZO PEROSI

al Teatro « La Fenice »

Although Perosi's works were also championed in other Italian cities with which he was most associated, particularly Rome as I discuss in chapter V, we can see here in Venice the success of the Fenice performances of Perosi's oratorios being used as to further the revival of the theatre's status in the city's renaissance.

Other composers drew inspiration for biblical oratorios elsewhere, for example the young Venetian composer, Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, whose *La Sulamite*, premiered at the Teatro Rossini in 1899. *La Sulamite* set the text of the Song of Solomon in the Latin from the Vulgate, giving voice to the girl Sulamite, a soprano, and her putative lover as a tenor.[660] This treatment showed that the handling of a Biblical text in a dramatic oratorio, performed in an opera house, still required sensitivity which, for the critic of *La Difesa*, Wolf-Ferrari, despite his undoubted skills and sincerity, had not quite managed. While Francesco Saccardo was publishing long paeans to Perosi's success, the paper's critic had rather sterner judgement for Wolf-Ferrari's premiere:

> the libretto… is a real travesty of one of the most mysterious books of the Bible… this text of profound love which appears very strongly in the original… should be taken allegorically, not literally, because taking a sacred, divine text so literally runs the risk of being interpreted, not only sacrilegiously, but in some respects also filthily.[661]
>
> Maestro Wolf-Ferrari has an extraordinary talent as a musician, highly cultured and an artistic spirit. But for pity's sake, he shouldn't continue to fillet texts which are mystical, sacred and full of the highest meaning.[662]

Yet since the 1890s, it is clear that the Venetian cultural elite were searching after new works to suit the changing tastes of the middle classes at a time when the *classe dirigente* were anxious to reinforce traditional Catholic values, while seeming

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[660] *La Sulamite, Canto biblico in due parte per soli, coro, orchestra e organo di Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari. Riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Fantuzzi, 1898).
[661] *La Difesa*, 25-26 February 1899. (See Appendix 1 Source 23)
[662] "Il Maestro Wolf-Ferrari ha… un talento straordinario di musicista, una coltura elevata ed un anima d'artista. Ma per carità, non si accinga più a sfrondare ciò che è mistico, sacro, pieno di alti sensi…" *La Difesa*, 27-28 February 1899.

cosmopolitan and international, and maintaining Venice's status among the *teatri massimi*. Although Meyerbeer was still popular into the 1890s, he was seen as increasingly old-fashioned compared to Wagner, though the religious aspects of his operas, for example in *Dinorah*, were praised for their moral qualities by the Catholic press, suggesting once again the idea that opera could have a spiritual, even evangelising effect: "this opera, rich in prayer scenes, is capable of making the faithful purer and even giving a little belief to the unbeliever".[663] Conversely, the editor-owner of the liberal *La Gazzetta*, Ferruccio Macola, was scathing about its musical and poetic qualities in comparison to Wagner, making an analogy between the archaicism of Metastastio with the contemporary poetry of Carducci.[664] The Venetian critics were keen to suggest that Wagner had now become popular beyond just intellectuals. They praised Wagner's supposed good opinion of Italian audiences (rather in contrast to Wagner's other comments to Angelo Neumann quoted at the beginning of this chapter). However, Venice clearly needed to establish that Wagner's status within the city was special and his music particularly appreciated. Having given the Italian premiere of *Rienzi* and the first staging of the *Ring Cycle* sung in German, the appreciation of Wagner's dramaturgy and musical language knew few bounds, and the religious and moral meaning of his works was usually a significant factor, particularly for the Catholic newspaper, *La Difesa*. Reviewing the production of *Lohengrin* which opened the 1889-1890 Carnival season, the newspaper observed that, "this drama, executed with perfect religiosity, not only in each scene, but in every word, this work of passionate nobility… has conquered most of our public".[665]

The following year Venetian audiences were introduced, as were opera houses all over Europe, to the southern piety and pastiche of an Easter hymn in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, but at the Fenice it was paired with a setting by a young Venetian composer Carlo Sernagiotto of Thomas Moore's Persian-inspired poem of a fallen angel restored to heaven through the tears of a child, *Il paridiso e la Peri*. *Il*

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[663] "quest' opera, ricca di preghiere, è capace di rendere più puri i credenti o qualchè po' credenti i miscredenti." *La Difesa*, 9-10 January 1890.
[664] *La Gazzetta*, 9 January 1890.
[665] "questo dramma, interpretato con esattezza religiosa non soltanto in ogni scena, ma in ciascuna parola, questo lavoro nobilmente appassionato… ha conquistato la maggior parte del nostro pubblico…" *La Difesa*, 27-28 December 1889.

Gazzettino gave Sernagiotto a warm and encouraging review, without any sense of incongruity between its mystical, allegorical setting and the 'verismo' Easter setting of *Cavalleria*.[666] Although the score does not survive, a libretto for the prologue shows that, like Mascagni's adaptation of Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Sernagiotto added a more conventionally Catholic hymn to the Italian translation by Andrea Maffei, to provide a suitable context for the prologue set in Heaven.[667] Conversely in the following season, at the Venetian premiere of Franchetti's *Asrael*, also partly inspired by Moore's poem as well as *Faust* and Wagner's *Lohengrin*, the stage depiction of heaven and hell became a point of intrigue and ridicule: "the staging was fairly well done, although it was impossible to avoid laughing when the scene was trying to represent heaven".[668] At the following performance, "there was the usual cream of Venice society. The gallery was packed with people wanting to see how heaven and hell were staged."[669]

We repeatedly find the Venetian press highlighting elements of the music, text and staging of new and revived works which emphasised sacred, spiritual and religious qualities, and reported audience approval of them. Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo*, in which the saintly Colombo is depicted as a Christ-like figure, was premiered at the Fenice in 1895, given for the Biennale with subsidy from the Comune, and conducted by Toscanini with a star cast including the baritone Giuseppe Kaschmann. The critic of *La Gazzetta* particularly praised the Act II finale, discussed earlier, in which monks intone a *Salve Regina* on board ship and the discovery of land prevents a mutiny, as a worthy successor to the depiction of paradise in *Asrael*, and observed that it was listened to with religious intensity by the audience. The moving orchestral prelude to the Epilogue "prepared the audience for the change in

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[666] *Il Gazzettino*, 1 February 1891.
[667] Carlo Sernagiotto, *Il Paradiso e la Peri: Azione musicale in un prologo e tre atti* (Venezia: E. Brocco 1890). Tommaso Moore, *Gli adoratori del fuoco; Il paradiso e la Peri, traduzioni di Andrea Maffei* (Milan: Hoepli, 1886). Interestingly the files at the Fenice archive show that Sernagiotto's text was approved by the Prefect, clearly demonstrating that new opera libretti were still being subject to the censorship regime in place since Unification with Italy. ASTF, Spettacoli 479, 23 – Recite Straordinarie – *Cavalleria Rusticana* 1890/1891, libretto *Il Paradiso e la Peri*.
[668] "La messa in scena assai bene, benché non sia possibile evitare il ridicolo quando la scena vuoi rappresentare il paradiso." *Il Gazzettino*, 28 December 1891.
[669] *Il Gazzettino*, 30 December 1891, "Alla terza [ripresa] dell'Asrael accorse il solito scelto pubblico della Fenice. Il loggione continua ad essere affollato dal pubblico desideroso di vedere come si rappresenti l'inferno e il paradiso.".

mood from the savage Act III to the atmosphere of the closing scene, serene, religious, heavenly." At the second performance, the *Salve Regina* was encored.[670]

Conversely, one work which did offend the critic of the clerical *La Difesa* was Mascagni's *Iris*, premiered in Venice in February 1900. *Iris*, the story of a Japanese daughter of a blind man, kidnapped, forced into prostitution and eventually disowned by her father, was Mascagni's greatest success since *Cavalleria*. Of its Venetian premiere, *La Difesa*, while praising its execution, complained that:

> with a story in which the principal moral is so seriously offensive, we cannot be glad about the applause with which an easy-going crowd has greeted the opera. Even if you can't pretend that the theatre is a school of morals, at least one has the right to ask whether this naked honesty is the best way to portray good feeling without leading to serious damage and ill-treatment.[671]

Yet by the time that *Iris* was revived at the Fenice in 1909, *La Difesa'*s moral criticisms had become somewhat muted, commenting negatively only on the rather superficial quality of the sense of spirituality of the chorus scenes, in which the popular *Inno del Sole* used a traditional hymn-like form in its pagan setting.[672]

As we have seen, the standard guidance from the Fenice given to impresarios from 1897 had the ambition of one Wagner opera and one 'modern' work, as well as a Verdi opera. *Asrael*, with a Faustian inspiration and setting in heaven and hell was one successful example in which the religious and spiritual themes aspects found approval from both the liberal and clerical press. An overlooked home-grown example is *Il Santo* by the Venetian Francesco Ghin, 'billed as a *leggenda mistica',* which the composer produced alongside *Il Trovatore* for the Spring season for the Biennale in 1903, supported with a subsidy from the Comune. *Il Santo* used a libretto by another Venetian, Luigi Sugana.[673] As discussed in chapter I, *Il Santo* set the

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[670] *La Gazzetta*, 28 April 1895, 6 May 1895.
[671] *La Difesa*, 5-6 February 1900. (See Appendix 1 Source 24)
[672] *La Difesa*, 29-30 December 1909.
[673] Sugana is relatively better remembered for the libretti for a succession of comic Goldoni adaptations, often in Venetian dialect, *I Quattro Rusteghi*, *Le Donne Curiose* and *Gli Amanti Sposi* for Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari.

battle between good and evil on a terrestrial plane, with St. Anthony in Egypt resisting earthly temptations sent by Satan, and a heavenly one, pitching angels against demons. Previewing the libretto, *La Difesa* commented that:

> The librettist has tried to place in a new light the eternal battle between the principles of Good and Evil… but he has placed before us not the usual Mefistofele of German romanticism, but the Judeo-Christian Devil, who tempted Christ, and at the same time using forms of orientalist fantasy.[674]

The actual performance was an immense success, with the critic of *La Difesa*, concluding:

> If Maestro Ghin has followed a path which takes him away from the direction of the modern school, he has given us a work rich in indescribable treasures and which will remain in the heart. Moreover, we wish to state the fact that he has wanted to employ a theme on a grand scale and high moral plane… above all worthy of note is the meaning contained in the portrayal of the figure of Satan.[675]

If this religious focus was expected to be welcomed by *La Difesa*, it was at least equally warmly received by the anticlerical *L'Adriatico.* It also expressed boredom with the usual product of the *giovane scuola*, rather relishing the turn to the religious and mystical subject:

> … while whimsical fashion smiles at the Fedoras, the Toscas, the Zazàs, at all the hysterical and old-fashioned painted heroines of the romantic theatre, Maestro Ghin has written a mystical opera… the librettist presents to me an inspirational theme… it is absolutely to encourage our fellow citizen-composer, who is a creator and patron of the art of music.[676]

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[674] *La Difesa*, 6-7 May 1903. (See Appendix 1 Source 25)
[675] *La Difesa*, 8-9 May 1903. (See Appendix 1 Source 26)
[676] *L'Adriatico*, 6 May 1903. (See Appendix 1 Source 27)

Of course, *L'Adriatico'*s less devout readers might also have been inspired by *Il Santo*'s portrayal of the erotic and exotic side of the legend of St. Anthony. Yet these responses are strikingly similar. Sugana and Ghin melded a range of classical, exoticist and biblical influences in their treatment of St. Anthony, but it ends with a celestial scene and angels singing Osannas very similar to Franchetti's *Asrael*. Both clerical and secular opinion found it spiritually or at least philosophically inspiring, an indication once again of the general appetite for opera to embody a serious purpose rather than simply provide entertainment for the city's wealthy and tourist class. Though *Il Trovatore* was given as the main gala performance for the opening of the Biennale, *Il Santo* was also given two gala performances, the first for the visiting French navy (of whom few were reported to be visible in the theatre) and for the visiting sovereigns.[677]

As we have seen, Catholic critics had no difficulty praising in equal terms the psychology of Meyerbeer, Boito and Wagner.[678] *Tannhäuser* was particularly praised by the clerical press in detailed consideration of its religious message and genesis as well as its Italian qualities:

> Who can remain unmoved when faced with the pastoral scene in Act I in which is placed so wonderfully the sublime song of the pilgrims, in which the huge questions of nature and faith are married together. The exclamation of Tannhäuser, who has fled Venus and is carried away in this pure atmosphere, almost overcome by the divine power, falls to his knees and cries 'Almighty God be praised!'

Wagner's sympathies, despite his Protestant heritage, are assumed to be Catholic:

> The Lutheran Wagner had certainly felt the mystical power of one of the most beautiful Catholic heroines of Germany, the dear Saint Elizabeth…

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[677] Sadly, the King and Queen were reported as arriving late for Act II at about 10:50pm, sending their congratulations to Maestro Ghin, but then leaving without seeing Act III. *L'Adriatico*, 13 May 1903; *La Difesa*, 16-17 May 1903.

[678] "Quest'opera [*Roberto il Diavolo*]… si può classificare psichamente col Faust, col *Mefistofele*, col *Tannhäuser*". *La Difesa*, 31 Jan-1 Feb 1890.

> Tannhäuser rightly closes the opera with the invocation: 'Saint Elizabeth, pray for me'.

Once again, we see the Catholic press supporting opera as an almost redemptive force:

> The beauties of *Tannhäuser*, I repeat, can have an effect also for people ignorant of music, because they will feel the poetry of nature, and of art, as well as the mystical ideal of the believer.[679]

Any reading of the opera's anti-papal implications seems not to have concerned the Catholic press. Not surprisingly, one work which did draw the ire of the clerical press was Strauss's *Salome*, premiered at the Fenice in 1909. Their reaction was anticipated with glee in *L'Adriatico*, which predicted that the supporters of the "clerical Giunta" would be appalled, though it had to admit that the Council had granted L10,000 towards the production to coincide with the Biennale.[680] *La Difesa* obligingly condemned both Wilde's adaptation of the Biblical story as a perverse travesty, and dismissed Strauss's music as anarchic.[681]

If we return to where this chapter began, the Venetian premiere of *Parsifal* at La Fenice in April 1914, we see that many of the characteristics of the relationship between opera and religion during the previous quarter century, are drawn together in this last great season at the theatre before the First World War. As mentioned earlier, *Parsifal*'s premiere was set for 12 April, Easter Sunday, something which was considered appropriate for a profound work about the passion of the Redeemer. Other works to be given on Easter Sunday in this period were *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1893) and Perosi's oratorio *Il Risurrezione di Cristo* (1901). The press was full of hope that the Fenice would outshine or at least match the other Italian *Parsifal* stagings, particularly that at La Scala in Milan. *La Gazzetta* highlighted the shortcoming of Italian productions of Parsifal so far, particularly that in Florence, being poor stage design. Venice would aim for higher, because the stage technician

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[679] *La Difesa*, 2-3 January 1901. (See Appendix 1 Source 28)
[680] *L'Adriatico*, 4 April 1909.
[681] *La Difesa*, 21 April 1909.

for *Parsifal*, Pietro Spiga, was employing, for the first time in Italy, the lighting techniques of Spanish designer Mariano Fortuny.[682] Fortuny, who with the support of the businessman and Fenice director Giovanni Stucky, made his fortune in Venice, was responsible for fundamental innovations in stage lighting technology, born of his fascination with Wagner. This had been reinforced through visits to Bayreuth, and his desire to realise Wagner's complex scenography to a higher standard. This led to the development of the 'Fortuny system' and 'Fortuny dome' which were installed in theatres across Europe, a version of which Spiga installed for the Fenice *Parsifal*. Fortuny's cycloramas could suggest the infinite sky and invisible changes previously unachievable with backcloths, which could better match the seamless movement between images and scenes which Wagner had been striving for.[683] Spiga's use of Fortuny's methods received huge approbation when *Parsifal* opened, particularly in the Grail Hall in Act III and their effectiveness in the scene changes.[684] This movement for 'realistic' lighting effects suggest a new iteration of the search for theatrical 'realism', discussed in chapter II, which composers like Puccini had been seeking through their use and spatialisation of realistic sounds and creation of recognisable scenic locations such as in *Tosca*.

However, the complexity of the technical changes made to the Fenice theatre, particularly lowering the orchestra pit, and demands of the production, pushed the Fenice beyond its limits, and thwarted the planned premiere on Easter Sunday. The dress rehearsal on Saturday 11 April clearly didn't go well and led Spiga, who was reported as having been seriously ill during final preparations, to decide proceeding was too risky, and it was announced that the premiere would be delayed until Tuesday 14th. This clearly disappointed those, like *La Gazzetta* were pleased by the scheduling of *Parsifal* for Easter Sunday itself.[685] The production preparations had

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[682] *La Gazzetta*, 29 March 1914; Fortuny felt compelled to write to the press correcting any misapprehension given in the press that he was designing the production himself. *L'Adriatico*, 14 April 1914.
[683] For Fortuny's journey in stage design inspired by Wagner, see Wendy Ligon Smith, 'Marinao Fortuny and his Wagnerian designs', *The Wagner Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2017) pp. 35-50. On the broader search to realise Wagnerian scenography during this period see Jurgen Maeder, 'L'utopia del dramma musicale wagneriano: Dal mito attraverso la scenotecnica verso il sogno di un teatro invisibile' in Naomi Matsumoto (ed.), *Staging Verdi and Wagner* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015) pp. 117-144.
[684] *La Gazzetta*, 15 April 1914.
[685] *L'Adriatico*, 12 April 1914; *La Gazzetta*, 12 April 1914.

been trailed almost daily in all the Venetian newspapers, with articles about the philosophy and music of Wagner as well as details about the staging, music and alterations to the theatre. Minute analysis even stretched to one 'mathematical enthusiast' providing for *La Gazzetta* statistics on the prevalence of the different religious and philosophical themes within the opera.[686] The premiere itself was greeted with unprecedented enthusiasm. The spiritual and religious aspects of the text and music, and the experience of watching it in the theatre, were prominent among the critical responses. The anticlerical *L'Adriatico* commented that the audience waited for the opening of the Prelude with a 'religious silence', and it praised the execution and effect of the rites of the Grail Hall and choral singing in Act I. *La Difesa* highlighted the philosophical genesis of the work in the Catholic tradition:

> The Christian ideal can also inspire and enrapture the imagination of non-believers and non Catholics like Wagner, although he has filled his hero with oddities and faults, he has made it possible to feel Christian mysticism in the most refined way. *Parsifal* is a solemn homage not only to the Christian ideal, but also to the Catholic faith from a Lutheran, and perhaps pantheist of the genius of Wagner.[687]

Here we can see that, alongside the technical innovations with which the Fenice *Parsifal* could promote the theatre and the city's image as a national leader, its religious message was one with which the Catholic Church could project its universal importance, not just to the faithful, but to the spiritual needs of all people.

A brief coda, which unites the Venetian apotheosis of Wagner's *Parsifal* with the resolution of the city's earlier culture war and search for a new international identity, is the doomed project for a new opera theatre on the Lido. Niccolò Spada, the developer of the one of the legendary resorts of the *belle époque*, the Hotel Excelsior, had been entertaining guests in the hotel's concert hall, the Kursaal, since it opened in in 1908, with a roster of international stars. But his ambition rose to levels perhaps inspired by his listening to Wotan in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. He wanted

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[686] *La Gazzetta*, 29 April 1914. Similar coverage trailed productions elsewhere, as I will discuss in chapter V in Rome.
[687] *La Difesa*, 15 April 1914. (See Appendix 1 Source 29)

to create, no less, a Venetian Bayreuth on the Lido with a grand theatre performing new Italian operas which would make Venice the centre of Italian lyric art as a music of the future. Construction was due to commence in September 1911. The project was backed by Mascagni, Leoncavallo and the tenor Tito Ruffo, who had been performing concerts at the Excelsior's hall. Sadly, the cholera epidemic which would inspire Thomas Mann's novella, *Der Tod in Venedig*, broke out that summer, causing the scheme to collapse, never to be revived.[688] The *beau monde*, when they returned, would have to make do with less exalted, sacred pleasures, or travel to the city for the Fenice's *Stagioni di Bagni*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the quarter century before the First World War, the history of opera in Venice sheds new light on the contours in the confrontation between the Catholic Church and the Italian State. Just as Venice acts as a unique case study of the response of municipal authorities to the economic crises which beset the new state after Unification, both in its cultural renaissance and its attempts at social and economic reform, so the political elite divided between those for whom Catholic values were an essential bulwark against radical Socialism, and those who held to the promise of democratic reform and the rise of the working class. Radicals like Selvatico and Bordiga viewed opera at the Fenice as a frivolous entertainment, rather than the educative or morally uplifting art which it claimed, and saw the 'religion of art' in other theatres or the visual arts. While some leading clerical politicians sided with the *progressisti* in opposing subsidies for a private opera house, the clerico-moderate alliance empowered the catholic conservative regime to give the theatre opportunities to reinvigorate its management and repertoire through a series of small subsidies. These proved insufficient as the basis for a sustained new model of managing the theatre, and the boxholders of the Fenice were compelled to renew their membership and increase their individual contributions. Yet the conservative moderate majority in the Comune, many of whom were evidently

[688] Achille Talenti, *Come si crea una città : il Lido di Venezia : la storia, la cronaca, la statistica* (Padova: A Draghi, 1921) pp. 113, 117. Strangely, Richard Bosworth's *Italian Venice*, misquotes Talenti to suggest that the Teatro Kursaal was constructed and functioning, contrary to Talenti's text. There are no other sources to suggest the theatre was ever constructed. Richard Bosworth, *Italian Venice* (New Haven: Yale, 2014) pp. 62, 64.

observant Catholics as we see from evidence including their support of religious groups and cemetery memorials, enabled the Fenice to raise its profile particularly through Spring seasons coinciding with the Biennale. While the culture war manifested itself in Venice through controversies over the nationalist and patriotic memorialisation of Catholic heretics, the promotion of erotic painting in an ecclesiastical setting, and the reimagining of Christ's mission as a Socialist renegade, from the end of the 1890s opera increasingly offered a sacralised space in which both the devout and the secular were frequently offered music drama which employed religious themes. Those operas which elevated the programme artistically and spiritually, whether in strictly Christian or Catholic terms, or at a more philosophical level which liberals could identify with, could be taken as consistent with the desire among the *classe dirigente* to ensure the social and moral value of culture. In music, both traditional and progressive works could further this agenda.

Chapter V – From Porta Pia to the Grail Hall via Sant' Andrea della Valle: Opera and religion in Rome after 1870

> Among those operas highly insulting to our faith, are numbered *L'Ebrea*… *Gli Ugonotti*, *Il Profeta*, operas which, from top to bottom, are both a hateful tirade and calumny against Catholicism, as well as a celebration, a glorification of heresy…[689] 'Un Assiduo' [A loyal reader]

Introduction

Compared to the post-Unification crises faced by Turin and Venice – the former losing its political supremacy, while the latter faced an Italian future shorn of economic importance as an Austrian Imperial port – the period of *Roma Capitale* after 20 September 1870 presents a very different urban context for the negotiation of the relationship between religion and opera in Liberal Italy. As we have seen, opera in Venice found its purpose as an art form questioned in a city re-inventing itself around culture and tourism, while the religious and political fault lines were realigned. In Turin, the intellectual centre of positivism and the emerging social sciences became the industrial capital of the new nation, and religious representation in opera offered one medium through which both Catholic and positivist views of the fantastic and supernatural could be projected. In Rome, as this chapter will argue, the self-image of the city as the heart of Catholicism continued to have a significant influence on how religious themes in opera were negotiated and perceived. Until well into the 1890s, both official and unofficial censorship acted to restrict the representation of liturgical, ecclesiastical and Biblical themes. Yet by 1900 the function of religion on stage began to be recognised more benignly, and reflective of Roman's religious and Papal heritage.

Rome's contested status as religious and political centre, and its rapid expansion from a sleepy provincial city focused on religious power and its archaeological past, to national capital, implied a new demand for and attention to its theatrical life.

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[689] *La Voce della Veritá*, 17 April 1890.

The physical transformation of Rome as the capital city of the Italian kingdom saw the development of new areas beyond the ancient centre, and the reorientation of the city away from the Vatican, towards *i quartieri alti*, with Via Nazionale becoming a new artery on the Viminale laid out in the 1870s, sustaining life in a surrounding area for 750,000 residents.[690] These were stimulated by the influx of immigrants – the wealthy new elite, mainly but not exclusively from the north – and large numbers of workers from the *mezzogiorno* to staff the lower ranks of the bureaucracy and build the new Rome. In fact, the Papal Government itself had commenced important innovations like the building of Rome's Termini station, and clerical figures like Monsignor De Mérode, continued to be implicated as developers and speculators in their own right after 20 September.[691] However, the immigrant populations injected new chauvinist tensions into this process of urbanisation.

The cultural life of Rome, and of its theatres in particular, was fundamental to this urbanisation of what had been, under Papal rule, a small and distinctly unmodern city. Ugo Pesci, Florentine journalist and correspondent of the liberal *La Fanfulla*, joined the invasion from the north and centre, soon derisively termed *buzzurri* (chestnut-sellers) by the Catholic press.[692] His account of the early years of *Roma Capitale*, until the death of Pius IX and Vittorio Emanuele, within weeks of each other in 1878, includes a lively account of the theatre scene in the Eternal City.[693] The two main theatres, the Apollo and the Argentina, had been owned by Prince Alessandro Torlonia, but were taken over by the Comune in 1869.[694] After 1870 the expansion of Rome gave new impetus to questions about the capacity and location of Rome's principal theatres, as well as standards of performance. The repertoire at both the Apollo and Argentina had long been given over to Vincenzo Jacovacci (1831-1881), considered the last of the old school impresarios from the *primo ottocento*, known

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[690] Italo Insolera, *Roma Moderna* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962) p. 26, quoted in Vittorio Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol. 1* (Rome: Edizione Capitulum, 1977) p. 19.
[691] Alberto Caracciolo, *Roma Capitale* 4th ed. (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1994), p. 79.
[692] "…for a real piece of dialect, the nickname… has been given to developers and promoters of everything considered as *piemontese* culture… the proverbial wit of the people of Rome wishes this word to be applied to everything which is growing in Rome, opinions, feelings and ideas which are alien to those of our people" *L'Osservatore Romano*, 25 April 1873, quoted in Caracciolo, *Roma Capitale*, p. 72.
[693] Pesci, *I Primi Anni di Roma Capitale* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1905) pp.307-315.
[694] Pesci, *I Primi Anni*, p. 307.

affectionately by Romans as *Sor Cencio*. Despite the injuries done to their libretti by the Papal censors, *Sor Cencio* had brought the Romans important Italian premieres, including Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Don Alvaro* (as *La forza del destino* was re-titled by the censor).[695] Despite this history, Jacovacci's tastes were generally not towards the progressive, as Pesci recalls. The most famous *buzzurro* music critic to join Pesci and others in decamping from Florence to Rome was Francesco D'Arcais, critic of *L'Opinione*, and one of the most important musical figures of this period until his death in 1891. D'Arcais had important roles in the direction of opera in Rome during the 1880s in particular, as a member of the Comune's *Deputazione degli Spettacoli* and jury member for the second Sonzogno prize which would propel Mascagni and *Cavalleria Rusticana* into instant celebrity. Initially, his columns from Rome rather reek of the northern superiority which must have grated, probably intentionally, with the more conservative and devout among the Roman upper classes. But he is far from consistent. In November 1871, he sets out his stall, claiming that Jacovacci's choices for the Apollo are behind the times and asking why he "hasn't thought of putting on stage [Meyerbeer's] *il Profeta* or [Halévy's] *L'Ebrea*? Why not produce *L'Africana* which everyone wants to see?" rather than *Rigoletto* or *I Vespri Siciliani*, "which everyone has seen and had enough of".[696]

Only weeks later, in his column of 11 December 1871, warming to his theme, he heaps praise on the progressiveness of Florence and its *Lohengrin*, which he contrasts with a long complaint about the state of Roman theatre, where only the usual Donizetti, Bellini and *primo ottocentesco* Italian repertoire are seen, rather than new operas, Wagner or rediscovered older composers like Cimarosa. But now, French grand opera is not enough, *L'Ebrea* included:

> we will have *L'Ebrea* and perhaps *Il Profeta*, operas new to Rome. But when we say *new to Rome*, it doesn't mean they are new to the audience who come

[695] Pesci, I Primi Anni, p.309; Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol.1*, pp. 39-42.
[696] "Si parla di *Vespri Siciliani* e del *Rigoletto*, due opere udite a saziatà. Eppure, vi sono molte opere: chi dico? Alcune capolavori che mai furono rappresentati a Roma. Perché il signor Jacovacci non ha pensato di mettere in scena *il Profeta* o *L'Ebrea*? Perché non riproduce *L'Africana*, generalmente desiderata?" 'Appendice - Rivista Drammatico-Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 23 October 1871.

> to the Apollo these days. I myself am pleased that Romans can also finally hear these scores, but I would like to see the programme for the Carnival-Lent season put together so as to satisfy the large part of the audience which has come from other provinces. No impresario in the world would any longer consider either *L'Ebrea* or *Il Profeta* as *new operas in any sense*. It would be better to hear either more recent works or much older ones. Why shouldn't Rome be the first to revive, for example, *La Vestale* or *Ferdinando Cortez* by Spontini? [original italics preserved][697]

As we shall see, the emergence of the Costanzi theatre (which opened in 1880) as the recognised *teatro massimo* for opera in Rome, was the result of tectonic shifts in both the opera industry and the social geography of Rome. Built by Domenico Costanzi close to the Termini station off Via Nazionale, by the First World War the theatre was being managed by Emma Carelli, one of the foremost sopranos of the turn of the century, who ran the theatre initially with her husband Walter Mocchi, and then by herself.[698] Vittorio Frajese charts the rise of the theatre through the critical reception in music periodicals and the daily press. He also positions the birth of the Costanzi within the faltering position of existing theatres and the failure to galvanise political leadership for a new theatre.[699]

Among more focused archival studies of opera in *Roma Capitale*, Marcello Ruggieri analyses the period of crisis in the 1880s through the records of the *Consiglio Comunale*, the central government, and polemics within the musical press about the merits of different options to create a new national repertory lyric theatre.[700] Geza Zur Nieden places this quest for a theatre worthy of the national capital in a comparative context with Paris as another manifestation of the *fine secolo* internationalisation of the opera market and urban spatial planning. Though not

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[697] *L'Opinione*, 11 December 1871. (See Appendix 1 Source 30)
[698] From 1926 it became the Teatro Reale, and an *Ente Autonomo* remodelled by Mussolini, See Susan Rutherford, 'The Prima Donna as Opera Impresario: Emma Carelli and the Teatro Costanzi 1911-1926' in Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (eds), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. 272-289.
[699] Vittorio Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera 4 vols.* (Roma: Edizione Capitulum, 1977).
[700] Marcello Ruggieri, 'Per un teatro nazionale di musica a Roma' in Bianca Maria Antolini, Arnaldo Morelli e Vera Vita Spangnuolo (a cura), *La Musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio* (Lucca: LMI, 1994) pp. 345-391.

central to her argument, she records that Rome had been considering plans for a new theatre since the 1850s.[701] Only implicit in her narrative is that the Roman elite under the Papal regime was the first to initiate such a development.

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the cultural significance of opera in relation to the most important dividing line in *Roma Capitale* – the Roman Question – how the implacable opposition of the Papacy to its reduced role could be reconciled with a strongly anticlerical national governing class, despite the overwhelming majority of citizens being Catholic adherents. Furthermore, the government of Rome itself in the Consiglio Comunale continued to be dominated by the old Roman aristocracy. In 1887 this tension came to a head when the Mayor of Rome, the Catholic Leopoldo Torlonia, was sacked by Prime Minister Crispi, for sending the Pope congratulations on his jubilee.[702] In fact, the Catholic press was anxious that Rome should be seen as an international capital more than that of an Italian state, even before its fall in 1870. In advance of the premiere of Meyerbeer's *L'Africana*, *L'Osservatore Romano'*s correspondent wrote in April 1866:

> … Rome will finally hear this monumental score that is *L'Africana*. It doesn't matter if it is to our taste or not; but we can't forgo our place among the great cities to Bologna and Parma, generally, I think that Rome should stand alongside Paris and Vienna, especially in art and music. Don't forget: '*noblesse oblige*!'[703]

The newly liberated press became central to the battle over the Roman Question, and its flourishing after 1870 is an important source of evidence about opera's significance in these debates, previously little explored. Celebrated journalists such as Pesci and D'Arcais were drawn by the importation of existing publications, and the mushrooming of new titles from Rome impelled publishers to expand their

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[701] Geza Zur Nieden, 'The internationalization of musical life at the end of the nineteenth century in modernized Paris and Rome', *Urban History*, 40, 4 (2013) pp. 663-680.
[702] Caracciolo, *Roma Capitale*, pp. 155-165.
[703] "…Roma abbia finalmente ad udire quel colossale spartito che è *L'Africana*. Sarà del nostro gusto o non lo sarà, poco importa; ma noi non possiamo abdicare I diritti di grandi Metropoli a favore di Bologna e di Parma; Roma, parlo in tesi generale, deve stare al confronto di Parigi e di Vienna, specialmente in fatto di arte e di musica. Vi sarebbe ragione di ripetere *noblesse oblige*!" 'Teatri', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21 April 1866.

businesses. At Casa Editrice Sonzogno, Raffaele opened the daily *La Capitale* in 1870 and was followed by his brother Edoardo, who spearheaded the company's rivalry with Ricordi in music and opera publishing in which Rome became a key battleground.[704]

Several scholars have surveyed the daily and periodical press in Rome before and after 1870, but coverage of cultural issues remains sparse. Olga Majolo Montanari describes the flourishing of coverage beyond political life after 1870, in contrast to the rather sterile cultural journalism under the Pontificate, by periodicals serving a much larger readership than newspapers had enjoyed previously. Specialised publications began to appear immediately, for example *La Palestra Musicale di Roma*, by the Accademia Santa Cecilia. *La Fanfulla della Domenica* was the most long-lasting of the new liberal journals, and many of its readers became familiar with the writing of D'Annunzio, Matilde Serao, Fogazzaro, Verga and Capuana, through its pages, rather than through their literary works directly. In 1878 *La Nuova Antologia* migrated to Rome from Florence.[705] Giuseppe Talmano has produced a three-volume history of the relationship between the daily *Il Messaggero* and the city, but has nothing to say about its coverage of art or culture in Rome.[706]

After 1870 the Catholic press, despite restrictions, also multiplied. As well as attacking each other from entrenched positions on the Roman question, liberal and Catholic publications used questions of cultural consumption as a proxy for this debate. A continuing and surprising gap in historiography of *Roma Capitale* is any detailed account of *L'Osservatore Romano*. As Francesco Malgeri points out in his introduction to Loredana Magnanti's catalogue of Roman papers and journals in the

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[704] Much of the Sonzogno archive was destroyed in an aerial bombardment in 1943, making study of the company's influence more fragmentary than Casa Ricordi in particular. However, important studies of their importation of new models of publishing in an age of mass-literacy include, Laura Barile, *Le parole illustrate: Edoardo Sonzogno, editore del popolo* (Modena: Mucchi, 1994); Silvia Valisa, Casa Editrice Sonzogno: mediazione circuiti del sapere e innovazione tecnologia nell'Italia unificata', in Ann Hallamore Caesar, Gabriella Romani and Jennifer Burns (eds), *The Printed Media in Fin-de-siècle Italy: Publishers, Writers and Readers* (London: Routledge, 2011) pp.90-106.

[705] Olga Majolo Molinari, *La stampa periodica romana dell'ottocento vol. 1* (Roma: Istituto di Studi Romani Editore, 1963) pp. LXXXVII-XC.

[706] G.Talamo, *Il Messaggero e la sua città: cento anni di storia vol.1 1878-1918* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979).

newspaper library of the Archivio Capitolino, there is still no serious study of this fundamental organ of Catholic opinion.[707] *L'Osservatore Romano* emerged in 1861 from a desire to launch a political paper alongside the official *Giornale di Roma*. It was published by two refugee Catholic lawyers from the Romagna after its fall to Italy, Nicola Zanchini and Giuseppe Bastia. They were supported financially by the marchese Augusto Baveria, who bought them out in 1866. The paper received the backing of Pius IX. However, under Baveria's direction, the newspaper:

> adopted an independent tone so that the ecclesiastical censor repeatedly had to write to the minister of the interior [of the Papal States] 'about the entirely new impudence and disrespect' of the director, whose 'insubordination and lack of common sense' showed itself not only 'in political issues, but also in those areas which are sacred or that are to do with morality and indecency'.[708]

Resuming publication after a short interruption in September 1870, the paper took a fervently loyal tone towards the vindication of the Papal temporal power which it maintained until the end of the pontificate of Leo XIII. Baveria was succeeded in 1884 by Marchese Cesare Crispolti, a member of the Papal Royal Guard, under whom the paper became livelier and more topical, and greatly expanded the number of its subscribers. The paper was bought by the Vatican in 1885.[709] Towards the end of the century, other Catholic periodicals appeared which aimed at a wider social canvas – for example *La Vera Roma* from 1890 and *Cultura Sociale* from 1897, directed by Dom Romolo Murri.[710]

Contemporary with Majolo Molinari, Malgeri conducted a similar survey of the specifically Catholic daily and periodical press, its management and attitudes to the Roman question.[711] As he puts forward, the Catholic press in Rome reveals not only the polemics of the more intransigent opposition to the 'revolution' or usurpation of

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[707] Loredana Magnanti, *Catologo dei quotidiani romani dell'Emeroteca dell'Archivio Storico Capitolino* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1993) p. 8 n. 9.
[708] ASR, Min int, 1110, titolo, 162, quoted in Majolo Molinari, *La stampa periodica romana* vol. 2, pp. 679-680.
[709] Filippo Crispolti, *Rimpianti* (Milano, 1922, p. 68), quoted in Ibid., p. 680.
[710] Ibid., pp. 289-290.
[711] Francesco Malgeri, *La stampa cattolica a Roma 1870-1915* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1965.

the Papal regime, but also shines a critical light on broader aspects of the struggle to govern the Eternal City and the new kingdom, from the fiscal burden and bureaucracy, to the censorship of the press and the disastrous colonial adventures of the Italian military.[712] He identified four distinct periods in this history until the First World War – the first, the "heroic" from 20 September 1870 to the death of Pio IX in 1878, in which *L'Osservatore Romano*, joined by a phalanx of new publications, was fiercely polemical and intransigent, holding to the *Non Expedit* line (which forbade Catholics from participating in national elections), and violently against the new arrivals in Rome. Among them, *La Voce della Verità*, produced by the *Società primaria romana per gli interessi dei Cattolici*, was formed in response to anticlerical attacks, and will be central to this chapter. While closely allied, these publications took distinct positions on how Catholics should engage with the new state and the extent of political participation under the *Non Expedit*.[713]

After the death of Pio IX emerged a period of "the end of illusions" according to the influential Catholic journalist, Giuseppe Sacchetti, or the beginning of the years of "dilaceramento" in Jemolo's phrase, when the flowering of the *movimento cattolico* was reflected in the variety of Catholic press's interpretations of the Roman question and its associated issues.[714] In Rome, while even *La Voce della Verità* tacked obediently towards the new line of Leo XIII of opening up discussion about an accommodation between Church and State, flashpoints still ignited, notably the erection of a statue to heretic Giordano Bruno in Campo dei Fiori in May 1889.[715] The advent of Christian Democracy at the end of the century encouraged the development of a new vision of the functions of Italian Catholicism beyond criticism of the legitimacy and structures of the Italian State, and a gradual occupation of public life and the contribution of their own cultural and political traditions. This was championed in publications under the aegis of the *Società italiana cattolica di cultura*.[716] The other important new periodical of this period, *La Vera Roma*, published from 1891-1916 in various forms, maintained a more intransigent line

[712] Malgeri, *La Stampa cattolica a Roma*, pp. 7-8.
[713] Ibid., pp. 8-9, 46-61.
[714] Ibid., p.9; A.C. Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato in Italia: Dalla unificazione agli anni settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977) p. 173.
[715] Ibid., pp. 55-56.
[716] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

towards modern society than its peers, even dividing with them over the issue of the Government's repression of the press in 1898 to support what it saw as a protection against Socialism.[717] The fourth period, after the crisis of the Opera dei Congressi, saw the emergence of new Roman papers like the *Giornale di Roma*, founded, like many of these Catholic publications, by a collaboration between priests, journalists and aristocrats, in this case a Sicilian Don Vincenzo Genua, edited by Marchese Gaetano de Felice.[718] When this publication folded in 1908 de Felice migrated to the newly formed *Il Corriere d'Italia*, which came under the publishing group of the Società Editrice Romana, and advocated greater catholic participation in politics through the alliance with conservative moderates.[719]

However, Malgeri focuses on the political stance of each publication on the Roman Question and broader confrontation between the Church and State. Neither he nor Majolo Molinari, investigate how this varied history of Catholic publications in such a relatively small city addressed itself to the cultural life of the population or the impact of the rapid growth in its immigrant population, or consider the significance of the coverage of the theatrical life of Rome, despite its importance in a city characterised as one primarily of consumption, even 'parasitic', with such a strong history of religious and political censorship.[720] This chapter will survey this reception history across a range of catholic and liberal publications using material often previously uncited, and consider better-known reviews of operatic works, and their religious themes, on a broader canvas than previous musicological studies.

[717] Ibid., pp. 197-208.
[718] Ibid., pp. 298-305.
[719] Ibid., pp. 321-330.
[720] M Scattareggia, 'Roma capitale: arretratezza e modernizzazione (1870-1914)' *Storia Urbana* (1988) vol. 42, p. 43, quoted in John Agnew, 'The Impossible Capital: Monumental Rome under Liberal and Fascist Regimes, 1870-1943' *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 80, No. 4. (1998), pp. 230.

The End of Censorship? or 'Don Alvaro'

The end of the Papal system of censorship is frequently cited as the most significant cultural marker in the transition to the new Italian State and a catalyst for the polemics which would characterise the initial hostilities between the Vatican and the new regime.[721] As discussed in the Introduction above, the piedmontese system of pre-censorship originally instigated in 1851 was gradually extended across the peninsula during the process of Unification. It set very broad, if vague terms for a prohibition on texts which would offend religious, moral or political convention. However, it delegated responsibility for approving texts and investigating theatres to provincial prefects (and sub-prefects) supported by the police (Questura).[722] A famous example of the Papal censorship in action before 1870 serves to throw the transition into sharper relief. Though Rome was proud of its recent history of Verdian Italian premieres, including *Il Trovatore*, *Un ballo in maschera* and *La forza del destino*, as already mentioned, they were badly treated by the censors. As Andreas Giger points out, during the 1850s the Jesuit publication *La Civiltà Cattolica*, cited Verdi's operas as examples of immorality.[723]

Although increasingly censors made a distinction between spoken drama and opera, an examination of the surviving libretto of the Roman *Don Alvaro* of 1863 demonstrates that required changes were more than a matter of cleaning up a few details.[724] Every religious setting, character and textual reference was expunged, using editing strategies which had frequently been employed against Verdi's earlier

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[721] For example, John Davis, 'Italy' in Robert Justin Goldstein (ed), *The Frightful Stage: Political censorship of the theatre in nineteenth century Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2008) p.220; Irene Piazzoni, *Spettacoli, istituzioni e società nell' Italia post-unitaria (1860-1882)* (Roma: Archivio Guido Izzi, 2001) pp. 201-207.
[722] Piazzoni, *Spettacoli*, pp. 135-138.
[723] Andreas Giger, 'Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi's Operas in Rome (1844-1859)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (November 1999) p. 233.
[724] *Don Alvaro, libretto, Nel nobil Teatro di Apollo La Stagione di Carnevale 1862 al 1863* (Rome: Ricordi, 1863). Giger, 'Behind the Police Chief's Closed Doors: The Unofficial Censors of Verdi in Rome', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* (November 2010), vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 63- 99. The textual changes demanded for *Don Alvaro* have been analysed Jesurum Olga Jesurum, 'Note della messinscena della *forza del destino*, Roma, Teatro Apollo, 7 febbraio 1863', *Studi verdiani*, 13 (1998) pp. 88-116.

operas in Rome.[725] The Monastery is secularised as a hospital with a "Director" and "recluses" rather than a Father Abbot and Monks.[726] Any direct reference to saints or God is excised or changed to a generic "Cielo!", and Alvaro condemns himself not as a "devil" but as merely "wicked". Despite the anxiety about any religious connotation, it is hard to credit that an elopement, several murders and a suicide were allowed to stand. Existing interpretations of the Roman reception of the censored *Don Alvaro* are therefore open to question. John Nàdas suggests that the Roman correspondent of the periodical *Il Sistro* blamed the final death toll for a tepid response to the opera, and that this set a pattern, even where it was uncensored in Italy, until Verdi revised the ending in 1869 to spare Don Alvaro.[727] The reception of the first production of *Don Alvaro* was indeed cool, but *L'Osservatore Romano*, which had started publication as a semi-official publication in 1861, did not comment on the excessive morbidity of the protagonists. It focuses more on what it saw as the weak libretto, which might easily be interpreted as a reaction to the effects of the censoring. Its other main criticism was with the execution and standard of performance.[728]

The historiography of theatre in the first years of *Roma Capitale* is dominated by these debates about censorship and freedom of expression, which was one manifestation of the general eruption of anticlerical feeling after Italian troops entered Rome on 20 September 1870. A ‘Society for Freethinkers’ was founded on 12 January 1871, which should have been Pio IX's jubilee year, and an anticlerical *mascherata* in Piazza del Popolo saw calls for death to priests and taking over the Vatican. In response, the establishment of the *Società primaria per gli interessi cattolici*, which would become a pivotal Catholic organisation, was praised by Pio IX. In the Church of Sant Ignazio, one of its founders, Don Curci, attacked liberals and even made sly, vulgar attacks on the person of Principessa Margherita, wife of

[725] Francesco Izzo, ‘Verdi, the Virgin, and the Censor: The Politics of the Cult of Mary in I Lombardi alla prima crociata and Giovanna d'Arco’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Fall 2007) p. 559.
[726] The opposite process can be seen in evidence in the adaptation of Di Giacomo's play *Mese Mariano* for Giordano's 1910 opera, where secular characters and images in a state-run orphanage are turned into the trappings of a convent institution. See chapter I.
[727] Nàdas, '*La forza del destino'*, p .8.
[728] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 February 1863.

Crown Prince Umberto.[729] Rome then saw a spate of provocative anticlerical plays which unsurprisingly outraged the Papacy. These included '*Il Fra Paolo Sarpi*' which lionised the renegade 16th century priest, and *La monaca di Cracovia*, which dramatised the international *cause-celèbre* of Sister Barbara Ubryk, a Carmelite nun rescued from torture and imprisonment from her convent in Cracow (at that time part of the Austrian Empire).[730] Even some of the liberal press found the displays obscene, and feared that they would create an atmosphere where a purely religious issue could spill into more general immorality, licentiousness and adultery, fearing its effect on young people. Allegedly, a Dominican friar was knocked stone dead by a thug coming out of another play, *I Misteri dell'Inquisizione di Spagna*.[731]

Pio IX protested publicly in his Lenten address in 1872:

> in public theatres, under the eyes of a public which won't support or welcome sacrilege and scandal, are parodied Catholic rites, foul deeds mixed in, which dishonour religion and offend natural decency.[732]

Receiving no satisfaction, in the summer the Cardinal Vicariate wrote directly to Prime Minister Giovanni Lanza, which, along with Lanzi's sarcastic reply were both published in *L'Osservatore Romano*.[733]

Yet opera's place within this 'culture war' has been less well considered.[734] No wonder, perhaps, that alongside the heady theatrical depravities described above, religion in opera, was viewed as less dangerous. However, that does not mean that we should assume the new regime in Rome immediately gave opera total licence in

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[729] According to the police report, "Don Curti condemned the "loose skirts of a whore" ['facili gonnelle d'una sgrualdrina'"] which was taken to refer to "our beloved and sainty princess". Later on, he vomited out other insults… and has taken refuge in the Vatican." Quoted in Vittorio Gorresio, *Risorgimento Scomunicato* (Firenze: Parenti, 1958) pp. 166-176.
[730] On the international context of the case of Sister Barbara Ubryk see for example, Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the anti-Catholic imagination in nineteenth century Germany* (Michigan: UMP, 2007) pp. 157-160.
[731] Gorresio, *Risorgimento Scomunicato*, pp. 166-176.
[732] Ibid., pp. 177-176.
[733] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 September 1872; Gorresio, *Risorgimento Scomunicato*, pp. 166-176; Davis, 'Italy', pp. 190-227.
[734] Papenheim, 'Roma o morte', pp. 202-226.

this regard. We have precious little archival evidence about opera censorship in this period, but at least one episode, just months before Pio IX's public protest, suggests that opera was indeed still subject to surveillance under the new censorship regime. Francesco D'Arcais, music critic for *L'Opinione*, wrote in October and November 1871, of his frustration with the continuing censorship of the stage. He was concerned, he insisted, with respectable drama rather than scurrilous anticlerical polemics. The prefect's office had objected to the appearance of the historical character of Cardinal Mazarin on the stage in a new play, *Monaldeschi*, by Pietro Cossa. It was eventually permitted on the condition that he wear the costume of a lay gentleman rather than a cardinal's robes. D'Arcais remembered how Halevy's opera *L'Ebrea* had attracted the censor's attention in a similar way, so that the Cardinal was not seen to kneel before a Jew, and the use of incense in the procession was removed. D'Arcais launches a sustained attack on the inconsistency of the new censorship, while conceding contemporary religious sensibilities deserved protection:

> I mean that the censorship might prohibit a living cardinal on the stage, with allusions to ecclesiastical matters of our times; but when we're talking about historical figures, what are the criteria, where is the law from which this ban derives?... We can't allow that Rome is subjected to a different regime in matters of the theatre… If they ban *L'Ebrea*, if they ban *Monaldeschi* in Rome, they should also be banned in other Italian cities. And that's not all: they should also ban *Roberto il Diavolo* and *Faust*, because in those you see cathedrals and sacred music; and *Il Profeta*, for the coronation scene; and *Giulietta e Romeo*, because there you have a friar; and *Gli Ugonotti* because in the famous conspiracy you have monks and priests; and *L'Africana* because there you have a chorus of bishops; and *La Favorita*, because Leonora and Fernando come on stage in the final scene dressed as monks.[735]

[735] 'Appendice - Rivista Drammatico-Musicale' *L'Opinione*, 2 November 1871. (See Appendix 1 Source 31)

Contrary to most scholarly assumptions that censorship of opera was no longer in operation, Pesci records that such changes were indeed required to *L'Ebrea* when it was performed during the forthcoming carnival season of 1871-1872:

> the police, in order not to lag too far behind the fondly-remembered Papal censorship, forbade the use on stage of thuribles for incense, and that the cardinal di Brogni knelt in front of Eleazar the Jew, as required by the libretto.[736]

As we will see during this chapter, despite the national legislation governing censorship, interpretation of the law and its enforcement were still highly variable. The sparse records in the Archivio di Stato di Roma show that still in the late 1870s, the questura and sub-prefects in Rome were frequently discussing whether plays including clerical and ecclesiastical themes should be censored.[737] What should we conclude from this evidence? We know that through the change in regime in Rome (as elsewhere during the Risorgimento) personnel in offices of state did not necessarily depart.[738] As the new censorship laws still covered religious, moral and political reasons for intervention, they might well have interpreted the new law along similar lines. Alternatively, they might have had concerns that in the current heightened atmosphere, there was a need to respond to a threat to the dignity of the Church.

The coverage of opera in the Catholic Roman press

Though Malgeri's periodisation of the evolution of the Catholic press is a helpful framework for assessing changing religious attitudes to culture and opera in particular, the evolution of the coverage of opera and theatre in the Catholic press in Rome was neither linear nor consistent. For example, some Catholic publications eschewed theatrical reviews during Lent, even into the 1880s, despite Rome's Teatro Apollo observing the traditional Carnival/Lent season ending at Easter.[739]

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[736] Pesci, *I Primi Anni*, p. 311.
[737] Archivio di Stato di Roma, Gabinetto della Prefettura di Roma, Censura Teatrale, 156.
[738] Piazzoni, *Spettacoli*, p. 204.
[739] *La Voce della Verità*, 10-11 April 1887.

L'Osservatore Romano ceased theatrical listings during Holy Week even during the first decade of the twentieth century. However, it had initiated a weekly, if erratic, theatrical column or *Appendice*, on its front page, as early as 1863, usually published on a Friday or Saturday. In the final years before the fall of Rome, the press remained heavily circumscribed, so these columns provide vital evidence about the final years of the Papal censorship and the semi-official attitude of the Church towards the theatre and opera. Theatre reviews (indeed most columns across the whole newspaper as noted by Majolo Molinari) are largely unsigned until the end of the nineteenth century, but give a lively account of upcoming productions, recent performances, and the workings of the theatres, perhaps even sometimes aping the ironic style of D'Arcais in *L'Opinione*.[740] While endorsed by the Papal regime, though not under its control until 1885, the tone of these columns gives little indication of the consequences of censorship, or moral qualms about opera, or even more popular theatre and dance.

We have already see how Verdi's *La forza del destino*, as *Don Alvaro*, was heavily censored for its Roman premiere. Its early reception in *L'Osservatore Romano* is intriguing. A preview eagerly looked forward to Verdi's new work, which had been delayed in getting to the stage, and its review of the first performance can be read as chafing against the censorship. Firstly, while referring directly to the opera correctly as *Don Alvaro*, it sneaked in, or perhaps shoe-horned in would be more accurate, the real title of the opera, by commenting that "by the *force of destiny*, the poor audience of the Apollo was forced to drink the last drop of a bitter cup, because of the indisposition of certain artists". The delayed opening meant that they had sat through Bellini's 1833 opera, *Beatrice di Tenda*, instead. One can also detect a slight desperation in the description of each number in the opera. Apart from the *Rataplan*, each is referred to obscurely, as this or that romanza, duetto or trio, or "the *preghiera* in Act II", perhaps because so much of the text was neutered in the censored libretto, so that 'Madre Pietoso Vergine', became 'Cielo pietoso, aiutami'. The review was highly critical of the drama and verse, complaining that it was unfit for Verdi, and the

[740] Majolo Molinari, *La stampa periodica romana vol.2*, p. 681. Only from 1898 is the theatre and music criticism column signed with the initials 'A.T.'.

audience showed its disapproval of the terrible librettist, notwithstanding its polite applause for the maestro during the performance.[741]

By its revival in January 1866, still under the censored title of *Don Alvaro*, *L'Osservatore Romano* was in two minds about how to refer to the opera. Its theatre listing for the day of the first performance refers to "*Don Alvaro*", but its Appendicist had thrown off all pretence and was openly referring to its actual title in its pages as *La forza del destino*.[742] There is certainly no suggestion at this point of a morally suspect side to Verdi, as condemned by *Civiltà Cattolica* in the 1850s, and no reference to its gruesome ending. While *La forza del destino* still does not merit a place among Verdi's masterpieces, the reviewer recognised that this performance was really the first time the score had been given faithfully, almost in its entirety, according to the musical inspiration of its composer. The singers were highly praised, and the impresario likewise for giving the Apollo a show worthy of Rome. His only caveats were the continuing inadequacy of the orchestra, particularly the strings, in an opera in which the orchestral part was recognised as of equal, if not greater importance than the singing, and what he saw as the woeful standard of the scenery. Unusually, given the general lack of attention shown to the scenic aspects of opera in Italy during this period, the review described staging as an "essential element of theatrical effect".[743] It may be that the run did not go smoothly, because by early February the correspondent is bemoaning the lack of anything interesting on at the Apollo, and recommending that in order to fill his coffers, the impresario bring back *La forza del destino*, whatever the problems he has had with singers indisposed, clearly a sign that the opera was now viewed as a popular success which would attract audiences.[744]

The fall of Rome in 1870 prompted a short hiatus, as has been observed, in the publication of *L'Osservatore Romano*, but it was soon back in print, and in this phase of the Catholic daily press, intransigent and legitimist, we can trace also through the way in which theatre was covered. Both *L'Osservatore Romano* and *La Voce della*

[741] 'Teatri', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 February 1863.
[742] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 January 1866; 20 January 1866.
[743] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 January 1866.
[744] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 February 1866.

Verità were unimpressed by whatever changes were made to the ecclesiastical scene in *L'Ebrea* in January 1872, and gleeful when the run was cut short in favour of *Rigoletto*. *La Voce* was in the same week, condemning the influence of Jewish journalists, engaging in a polemic with the radical paper *La Voce della Libertà*, edited by Edoardo Arbib. Responding to an attack on the Church for maintaining ignorance among the people, it struck back: "The Vatican has no need to be educated by others, it is already learned. It has taught moreover the whole of Europe and its supposed teachers. But you can't yet manage to teach the Jews."[745] It is hard not to see these prejudices reflected in its aversion to the staging of *L'Ebrea*.

To begin with, and rather unhelpfully for the scholar, the theatre column disappeared from *L'Osservatore Romano* for most of the 1870s. The confrontation between the Papacy and the Government about the scandalous nature of the anticlerical texts being presented is played out in the leading article in September 1872.[746] Thereafter a veil is drawn over the Roman stage, we can speculate because of editorial policy towards 'entertainment', rather than the need to focus on guiding Catholic adherents under the new regime. That is, until January 1878, when for a brief period, just before the death of Pio IX, short critical reviews and news pieces were again featured. Prominent among these is a short, but gushing review of *La forza del destino*: "the applause rang out from the first note to the last. *La forza del destino* is one of those operas that the more you hear, the more you like it". It gives give little detail about the verdict on the restored monastic setting and religious atmosphere, or the revised, redemptive ending, so it is difficult to know which, if either of these factors, had the greater influence on the Roman audience. The only hint of interest in the religious aspects of the plot which are usually interpreted is the comment that "as Melitone, we would suggest that Vaselli moderate his gestures, so that this grotesque character comes across less trivially."[747] We can therefore conclude that any idea of the censorious Friar as a buffo character, the Church being laughed at,

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[745] "Il Vaticano non ha bisogna di essere educato da altri; è già educato. Ha educata anzi egli l'Europa e I suoi pretesi educatori. Non riusci però ancora ad educare gli ebrei" La Voce della Verità, 12 January 1872.
[746] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 September 1872.
[747] He is generally referred to as a 'buffo' character, eg. Budden, *The Operas of Verdi vol. 2*, p. 507; As Roger Parker points out the general atmosphere in *La forza del destino* is of religion as a safe haven. Parker, 'One priest, one candle, one cross', pp. 30-31.

was rejected. The paper went on to complain that, running in harness with Boito's *Mefistofele* (which had been given the previous season and which the correspondent admitted he did not like), many people hadn't had the chance to see *La forza del destino* even once, so Jacovacci should rebalance the number of performances between them.[748] The following year, *La Voce della Verità*, previewing a performance of *La forza del destino* in the Politeama Romano, described the opera as “music truly delightful to Romans, especially of the [working class] Trastevere district”.[749]

After the death of Pius IX, these '*Appunti*' disappear again until the beginning of 1879 when a new version of the column becomes more established once again. From the 1880s, although we still see *La Voce della Verità* abstaining from theatrical consumption, or at least discussion, during Lent, these two Catholic daily papers become more part of the critical mainstream among the daily press. There is still friction between D'Arcais in *L'Opinione* on the one hand, and *L'Osservatore Romano* and *La Voce della Verità* on the other, over drama which offends religious sensibility, notably a comedy, *Il Cantico dei Cantici*, involving discussion of the celibacy of the priesthood, by Felice Cavalloti. *L'Osservatore Romano* complains that the Austrian censors have permitted it in Trieste only with alterations to the costumes and text, and banned the author from attending. D'Arcais taunts this Catholic defensiveness.[750] Yet by now both these Catholic organs are enthusiasts for *La forza del destino*, which returned to Rome at the new Costanzi theatre three times, in 1881, 1884, and 1887. 'Pace, pace, mio Dio!' which had before 1870 been referred to not even by name, was consistently praised as the highlight.[751] D'Arcais was not to be outdone though, and wrote long reviews both in June and November 1881 about both Verdi's "much abused" masterpiece, and the quality of the Costanzi peformances. He lightly teases the ecstasy with which Roman audiences now greet

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[748] "Gli applausi che fioccarono dalla prima all'ultima nota… *La forza del destino* è una di quello opere che più si sentono a più si piacciono"; "noi vorremmo però che [Il Vaselli] moderasse alquanto l'azione, rendendo così meno triviale il grottesco personaggio che rappresenta", 'Appunti Teatrali', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5 January 1878, pp. 2-3.
[749] *La Voce della Verità*, 5 June 1879 (“musica simpaticissima ai romani specialmente del Trastevere”).
[750] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18 November 1881; *L'Opinione*, 31 November 1881.
[751] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 November 1881, 3 January 1884; *La Voce della Verità*, 15 January 1884.

the work, on its "fiftieth production in Rome, more or less", saying that many in the audience would happily hear it three or four times in an evening, and he expects "when it pleases God to call them to the kingdom of heaven, angels and cherubim will greet them plucking on their harps of gold the cavatina of Don Alvaro and the sermon of Melitone" – perhaps deliberately choosing two of the least 'celestial-sounding' numbers in the score.[752] Despite these regular outings the number of performances for each production increased to twelve in the autumn of 1884 and in 1887 still managed nine.

Equally well received by *La Voce della Verità*, and praised for its execution under conductor Franco Faccio, despite D'Arcais' complaint fifteen years previously about its lack of novelty, was Halévy's *L'Ebrea*, including the finale of Act I with its religious procession, censored in previous decades, though there is no evidence in the review about how the staging of the rite had changed since.[753] What was undeniably novel was the touring production of Verdi's *Otello* from La Scala which arrived in Rome in April 1887 to much fanfare, again with Faccio conducting and Francesco Tamagno as Otello. *La Voce della Verità* concurred with the general approbation of a new masterpiece from the venerable Maestro. Otherwise its review, of its correspondent's third visit to the production, is noticeable for the particular attention given to the text and the numbers in which religion is most prominent:

> the mocking 'credo' of Iago, which one always wants encored… the monologue of Otello, '*Dio mi potevi scagliare tutti e mali*'… With what words can you describe the beauty of the… *Ave Maria*, another piece that you never tire of hearing time after time, which always provokes a genuine enthusiasm, an emotion not cliched.[754]

By the end of the 1880s, the responses of both Catholic and liberal publications in Rome had evolved since the first days of *Roma Capitale*. A more diversified range of publications, the passing of the first spasms of religious conflict over the Roman

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[752] Appendice - Rivista Drammatico-Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 18 June 1881.
[753] *La Voce della Verità*, 15/16 May 1886; 26/27 May 1887.
[754] 'Notizie artistiche e teatrali - Ancora 'L'Otello' al Costanzi', *La Voce della Verità*, 27 April 1887.

question, and the renewal of the repertoire to be seen in Roman opera houses, meant that the range of examples of religion in opera received more frequent, and positive coverage. We will see, however, that in the following decade, there remained a division between the appreciation of the religious themes and characterisation depicted through operas like *Otello*, and a continuing disapprobation by the Church and conservative Catholic opinion of stagings of ecclesiastical authority and rites into the 1890s.

Processions, piety and prophets – policing religion at the Teatro Costanzi

The emergence of the Costanzi theatre as Roman's foremost stage for opera was far from pre-ordained, despite being hailed as we have seen for the 1887 La Scala *Otello*, 'worthy' of Rome. As elsewhere in Italy, demographic change challenged the faltering business model of Rome's aristocratic theatres. An impresario had to satisfy the contractual demands of the box-owners as well as marketing a season to a wider audience, while hoping to manage his cash flow against an uncertain and often politically contentious subsidy from the city. The rapid expansion of the city and the financial pressures on the new state, precipitated new initiatives to address theatres' sustainability. One audacious answer was the construction of a new theatre. Property developer Domenico Costanzi, a native of the former Papal state of Le Marche, negotiated permissions to build a politeama-style building adjacent to one of the new hotels on Via Nazionale. This forced a moment of reckoning for the conservative Roman aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie who considered a politeama the type of popular theatre which was beneath the dignity of Rome. Complaints were made that Costanzi's plans contained too few rows of boxes. Meanwhile the Rome Council took the momentous step to embank the Tiber requiring the demolition of the Apollo (whose regular flooding was another perennial risk faced by impresarios). Another proposal emerged by engineer Adolfo Lepri to build a new Royal Theatre to replace the Apollo more centrally than the Costanzi, though this came to nothing for lack of political support.[755] The opening of the Costanzi on 27 November 1880, with

[755] Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Teatro vol. 1*, pp. 18-31; Ruggieri, 'Per un teatro nazionale'; Zur Nieden, 'The internationalization of musical life', pp. 663-680; Comune di Roma, *Roma Splendidissima e Magnifica: Luoghi di spettacolo a Roma dall'umanesimo ad oggi* (Milano: Electa, 1997) pp. 152-154; Adolfo Lepri, *Un progetto per un nuovo Teatro Regio in Roma* (Rome: Sinimberghi, 1879); Archivio Capitolino, ACC, 21 giugno 1878.

Rossini's *Semiramide*, was a social, if not critical, success. Jacovacci, the venerable Roman impresario who had reigned over both the Apollo and the Argentina for much of the previous four decades, was hired to promote the inaugural season. Despite his experience and popularity, *Semiramide*, neither an obvious crowd-pleaser nor an innovation, was judged less than ideal in terms of the quality of singers and the size of the orchestra. An opening season of Rossini, Bellini and Verdi's *Il Trovatore* could hardly be described as progressive in 1880, given that D'Arcais had been criticising the focus on such repertoire on his arrival in Rome almost a decade earlier.[756]

Despite the reaction to the undeniable qualities of the theatre, which according to D'Arcais put it in the same rank as Bologna and the leading theatres of Europe, doubts remained about whether it could attract sufficient support from the elite with only three rows of boxes – rather than sink to the level of a real politeama – as well as its location outside the traditional centre of theatre-going of ancient Rome.[757] *L'Osservatore Romano*, while joining the consensus about the quality of the new theatre, continued to rail against various aspects of its operation – the incommodious setting, short notice given for cancelled performances, late start times so far 'out of town' and the danger of thefts from boxes.[758] The revival of *La forza del destino* in 1884 prompted the Vatican paper's correspondent to observe that the people in the cheaper seats had low expectations and applauded despite the weaknesses of the artists, while the stalls remained unmoved, expecting more for their money.[759]

The eventual demolition of the Apollo in 1888, and Costanzi's financial problems in operating the new theatre himself, could not persuade the city to buy Costanzi out and make it Rome's new *teatro massimo*, rather than invest in the restoration of the Argentina.[760] The Costanzi's programme shrank until the late 1880s when Guglielmo Canori became the engine for its consolidation, crowned, as we have seen, by Verdi's *Otello* in 1887.[761] The influence of Sonzogno's growing publishing empire, in

[756] Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera* vol. 1, pp. 33.
[757] Rivista Drammatico-Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 20 June, 1881; Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol.1*, pp. 45-56.
[758] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 31 october 1881; 15 November 1881.
[759] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 January 1884.
[760] Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera* vol. 1, pp. 62-65.
[761] Ibid., pp. 74-87.

competition with Ricordi, brought new French and German repertoire to Rome, though D'Arcais criticised the Costanzi for not promoting works by the new generation of Italian composers synthesising Italian and ultramontane influences, Franchetti's *Asrael* and Puccini's *Le Villi* specifically.[762] Sonzogno took over the management of the Costanzi in 1889, and moved his competition for new operas, which he had launched to limited success in 1883 in Milan, to the Costanzi, for a second edition in 1890. This proved the catalyst for the popularisation of a new operatic language.[763] The victory of Mascagni's adaptation of Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and the subsequent propagation of a slew of such 'slice-of-life' dramas, is part of the myth of operatic ‘verismo’ in popular and academic discourse. However, the competition is significant in a way previously overlooked, as a case study in the continuing culture war to police the representation of religion on stage.

Musically, as we saw in chapter II, the religious aspects of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and its peers are the most conventional aspects of the score. Theologically and morally, particularly in their depiction of women's piety, they were uncontroversial. But little attention is given to the reception of these themes, even at the premiere of *Cavalleria* in Rome, the seat of the Papacy and a population comprising northerners with little direct experience of 'the South', ‘real’ southerners working in the bureaucracy and new service industries, and finally the traditionally conservative Roman audience. This section will also reveal how informal censorship, and self-censorship, in respect of religious content remained a powerful force even in the 1890s in Rome.

Stanislao Gastaldon’s three-act adaptation of Verga’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*, as *Mala Pasqua!*, was also commissioned by Sonzogno, and produced at the Costanzi only weeks before the competition finalists including Mascagni’s version. Gastaldon and his librettist, Bartocci-Fontana, have inevitably suffered from the comparison with Mascagni's success, but the response from the liberal Roman press was generally extremely positive, reporting (unlike at the premiere of *Cavalleria Rusticana*) that the Costanzi was full, and the best society had turned out, presumably partly because

[762] Ibid., p. 101.
[763] The jury included D'Arcais as well as Amintore Galli, Editor of Sonzogno’s *Il Teatro Illustrato*.

the opera was being given as part of the main season, rather than in competition. It spoke of an extremely enthusiastic reception particularly *the preghiera* in Act 1, '*O benedetta Vergine!*', which reminded the correspondent of the *Ave Maria* in Verdi's *Otello*. "You only get acting and singing like this in paradise. And the public felt transported to paradise."[764] Act II continued to engage the audience: "They wanted the prelude from Act II encored, which brought back the theme from the *preghiera* – they applauded the chorus hugely, too much! In the religious festival…". Act III was reported as less well received, and A. Luzzatto in *La Tribuna* concluded that this was the effect of stringing out a story longer than it deserved.[765] The following three performances were received equally warmly, Act III more than at the opening night.[766] D'Arcais in *L'Opinione*, while adopting a more detached tone, concluded with this generally favourable report, while highlighting similar dramatic and musical weaknesses.[767] *Il Messaggero* did not demur either.[768]

L'Osservatore Romano began its terse review of *Mala Pasqua!* in a rather less welcoming mood:

> In the performance of the new opera by M Gastaldon, there is something which we have to deplore, and a majority of the public agrees with us, which is the indecent parody of a religious procession which is given in the second act, and in which, under the canopy [*baldacchino*], between torches and priests is the celebrant with the Holy Sacrament.
>
> Given this, although without hope that we can prevent such a profanation being repeated, here are a few words reporting on the evening. [769]

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[764] "Si recita e si canta soltanto in paradiso. E il pubblico si sentiva portato in paradiso". *La Tribuna*, 11 April 1890, A. Luzzatto.
[765] "Si volle il bis del preludio del secondo atto; il quale riproduce il tema della preghiera - si applaudirono i cori – molto pieni, troppo pieni! – della festa religiosa…". *La Tribuna*, 11 April 1890.
[766] *La Tribuna*, 14, 17 April 1890.
[767] *L'Opinione*, 11 April 1890.
[768] *Il Messaggero*, 11 April 1890.
[769] Teatri e Concerti: *Mala Pasqua!* al Costanzi', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 11 April 1890. (See Appendix 1 Source 32)

Given this unpromising start, its report was consistent with others, including the reception of "*O benedetta Vergine*". The journalist was not to be mollified though, signing off with "In short, a success which, we believe, cannot last, given the triviality of the music, the slight originality in the story, and the lack of any significance in the subject of the opera". *La Voce della Verità* was even more forthright, publishing a long front-page editorial entitled ‘Sacrilege!’ condemning the opera as a work of masonic conspiracy against the Catholic faith, encouraged by Prime Minister Crispi, which profanated the holy season of Passiontide and Easter.[770] This generated an even stronger response from a reader of the paper a few days later, which the paper published in full, the opening lines of which were quoted at the opening of this chapter, but which merits full transcription here:

> With its articles the good *Voce* hasn't put its finger on a fresh wound, but has touched a chronic sore; the scandal to be deplored in stinging terms has become a regular event; there isn't an opera house or theatre, where it isn't reproduced each season, in conditions worse every time. The libretto of *Mala Pasqua!* isn't one of those that offends against religion, while in so many other operas which are given almost every year in Rome, the insult to Catholicism, the injury to the Church, constitute the shape and substance of the drama. Among those operas highly insulting to our faith, are numbered *L'Ebrea*, produced last season, *Gli Ugonotti*, *Il Profeta*, operas which, from top to bottom, are both a hateful tirade and calumny against Catholicism, as well as a celebration, a glorification of heresy. If only each time these operas were performed at the Apollo, the Argentina and the Costanzi, the Catholic press were to speak like the Voce has done over *Mala Pasqua!*, the public might not be so used to them and left indifferent to such performances. The processions of priests, of monks and nuns, of prelates in purple, bishops in cardboard mitres, canopies, crosses, icons, banners, that you see displayed in *L'Africana*, in *Il Profeta*, *L'Ebrea*, *Don Carlo*, and in many other operas, the Roman public have become used to. In *L'Ebrea*, for example, one is gravely offended by the invective that Eleazar spits at the Christians and the Christian

[770] *La Voce della Verità*, 11 April 1890, ‘Sacrilegio!’.

God; you see with revulsion a Cardinal singing his part under a spotlight, kneeling in supplication and crying at the feet of a Jewish merchant; the scene of the oaths and blessing of the swords in *Gli Ugonotti* should be artistically stunning, but I don't know if there is another scene in which the feelings of Catholics are so atrociously maligned and trampled on as this one, in which music and drama conspire to sow hatred against the Church and the priesthood. Apart from these operas written with the positively hostile objective against Catholicism are the many others performed every day in which sacred things and characters are profanated! The last act of *Il Conte di Gleichen*, for example, unfolds inside a cathedral and you see the Pontiff administering baptism; in the prologue of *Mefistofele* you hear the voice of God; in *Parsifal* the choir sing the sacred words of the Holy Eucharist; the hugely popular *La forza del destino* occurs almost wholly among cloisters, among religious, and the part of the buffo is given to a monk who preaches Christ standing on a barrel; the final act of *La Favorita* presents us with a monk and a woman dressed as another monk, who sing a love duet in a cloister of a cemetery while the monks accompanied by organ sing psalms inside the church; similarly *The Barber of Seville* is twisted to be anticlerical, Don Basilio, the maestro di cappella di Beaumarchais, is almost always represented as a priest, a Jesuit, dressed in a cassock, and with this robe gives himself over to the jokes and caricature of his part…

These continual abuses and theatrical license have demoralised the public and made them willing to submit to every greater affront. To this deplorable condition of the spirit, this obvious trend, should we attribute the scandal of sacrilege which is denounced by *La Voce*. But it should be agreed about this sad chapter, that many Catholics, including many with the best intentions, have consumed a lot and tolerated too much. Finally, with regard to operas like *gli Ugonotti*, *l'Ebrea*, *il Profeta*, and others from a religious, historical or moral angle, are nothing but a continuous, real insult to the Church, on which Catholic citizens can agree; to the extent that the virtuous press don't find against these and their like, with at least a fraction of the rush of eloquence that the *Voce* has launched against *Mala Pasqua!*, it will find itself in a really bad place, regardless of the zeal it demonstrates now and then.

‘A loyal reader’[771]

The editorial comment appended to this diatribe seems caught between excitement at its lack of moderation, and self-awareness that the paper has been accused of sleeping on the job of acting as moral policeman for the theatre, given that it had writing glowingly of most of the operas now accused of being anti-Catholic.[772] Yet, it is also hard to avoid the similarity between parts of this catalogue of operatic heresy with Francesco D’Arcais’s sarcastic complaint about the vagaries of censorship in 1871, quoted earlier in this chapter. Was the ‘loyal reader’ really D’Arcais satirising the clerical press?[773]

Either way, it has not been previously discussed that this outrage against *Mala Pasqua!* had a real effect. By the second night of the opera, some of the offending aspects of the religious procession, namely the *baldacchino* and the actor holding the Sacred Host, were excised from the procession.[774] By the time the run concluded after only four performances *La Voce della Verità* said this must demonstrate that either the majority of people attending the best theatres were avid readers of their newspaper, or that the religious procession in *Mala Pasqua!* turned the stomachs of all Catholics, who therefore followed suit in staying away.[775]

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[771] *La Voce della Verità*, 17 April 1890. (See Appendix 1 Source 33)
[772] “even if it contains severe judgements on the conduct of the Catholic press towards the theatre; we have published it, because we do not hide from our responsibility.” *La Voce della Verità*, 17 April 1890.
[773] Other journalistic wars in which D’Arcais defended theatrical licence against *La Voce della Verità* provide further motivation for him to subvert clerical outrage in this way, for example over the play *Il Canto dei Cantici* by Felice Cavalotti at the Teatro Valle in Rome (L’Opinione, 31 October 1881).
[774] “Diciamo subito: iersera, alla seconda di *Mala Pasqua!*, se fu conservata la processione, fu almeno soppresso il baldacchino e il figurante che simulava portare il Venerabile.
Del resto, il teatro era mezzo vuoto, e se era una conseguenza del sacrilegio della prima rappresentazione, l'impresa non ha che a incolpare sè stessa. Della musica e dell'esecuzione non crediamo di dover oggi parlare.” *La Voce della Verità*, 13/14 April 1890, ‘Notizie artistiche e teatrale’.
[775] *La Voce della Verità*, 25 April 1890, ‘Il defecit della *Mala Pasqua!*’. The paper cited as additional evidence that a musician, Aristide Franceschetti, had written to the liberal newspaper *Don Chischotte*, admitting to having paid off the artists of *Mala Pasqua!* and specifically blaming the campaign by the clerical press to persuade Catholics not to attend anathematised performances.

Yet the following month, we see a quite benign reaction on behalf of the Catholic press to Mascagni's version of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. *La Voce della Verità* found nothing to complain about at the opening night and was increasingly warm about the music at following performances.[776] *L'Osservatore Romano*, in a fairly brief review of the opening of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, praised, among other numbers "the religious chorus… which is an exquisitely crafted piece" , and qualities almost the opposite of *Mala Pasqua!*, "the rare quality of inspiration, and almost always original".[777] Of course, we do not know whether the same correspondent reviewed both operas for the newspaper as articles remained unsigned at this point, but there is clearly an expectation among the Catholic press in Rome that the treatment of religious ritual and music had an appropriate musical and dramatic mode which Mascagni adopted more successfully than Gastaldon, and that these were still following conventional paths of adding local colour and popular piety which could at least find a register acceptable to conservative Catholic taste, while avoiding offending clerical dignity with ecclesiastical ritual.

Yet the competition entrants themselves did not escape censure or censorship entirely. One of the failed entries was Enrico Bossi's *Il Veggente*, 'The Prophet', with a libretto by Gustavo Macchi. *Il Veggente* was the middle section of an envisaged trilogy entitled *La Leggenda Umana*. It is set in the house of the sisters Mary and Martha, who are visited by the resurrected Christ, whose identity is obscured by the name "Il Veggente".[778] As Bossi makes clear in the preface to the published libretto, "the jury classified the opera among the best, explaining at the same time that it wasn't suitable for production because of the nature of the subject". According to Frajese, Amintore Galli, jury member and editor of Sonzogno's own *Il Teatro Illustrato*, blamed "I religiosi del nostro Concorso".[779] Yet Bossi managed to have *Il Veggente* premiered at the Teatro dal Verme in Milan only weeks later June 1890. *La Voce della Verità* recommitted to the battle against operatic heresy by

[776] *La Voce della Verità*, 18/19 May 1890.
[777] "il coro religioso… che è un pezzo di fattura squisita"; "il pregio singolarissimo d'ispirazione, quasi sempre originale. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 May 1890.
[778] *Il Veggente, poesia di Gustavo Macchi, musica di Enrico Bossi* (Milan: Stabilmento G Civelli, 1890). *Il Veggente* was translated into German as *Der Prophet* and performed in several German cities from 1896; Corrado Ambiveri, *Operisti minori dell'ottocento italiano* (Roma: Gremese Editore, 1998) pp. 25-26.
[779] Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol.1*, p. 112 n. 35; pp. 127-129 n. 28.

condemning this performance, asking how the authorities could permit such offence against religious feeling by allowing the depiction of the divine person of Jesus Christ and the mysteries of religion to be staged in such a vulgar fashion, especially on the feast of Corpus Christi, when the faithful are praying to the Lord for pity for the sins committed against the body of Christ.[780] Days later, *La Voce della Verità* revelled in a grovelling apology from Bossi sent to the paper through an intermediary who was a priest. Bossi regretted any offence given, admitting the choice of subject was unwise, and withdrawing it from production. He explained that he had been trying to create a new type of dramatic religious oratorio but now realised the error of his audacity, and would be burning every last page of the score.[781] The different reaction to these operas demonstrates that censorship of religious themes was still a powerful force at the beginning of the 1890s, despite the lack of evidence of use of the continuing censorship laws. While off-stage liturgical music and on-stage prayers and hymns, such as seen in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, or for that matter earlier operas like *La forza del destino*, were seen positively by the clerical press, 'realistic' on-stage depiction of religious ritual, new testament themes, oblique references to Christ as a character, or meditations on Christianity and the Gospel, could not be tolerated in Rome, or where the influence of the clerical press still held elsewhere.

Indeed, this situation in Rome persists even longer, as we see from the case of *Cristo alla Festa di Purim* in 1894. Bovio's play presented Judas Iscariot as an anti-authoritarian figure, alongside Mary Magdalene witnessing Christ's rescue of the woman caught in adultery. Bovio was clear that no anti-religious intention was meant by the play, although he argued for an evolution of a more humanised religion away from its control by the priesthood. As discussed in chapter I, Giovanni Giannetti adapted the play by Giovanni Bovio and set it to music very soon after it was written, and it was ready for performance in Rome in 1894. Michele Nani has detailed in his research on Bovio's play, that the Cardinal Vicar to write in protest to the Prefect of Rome, Alessandro Guiccioli.[782] The intervention of Prime Minister Crispi, keen at this juncture to pursue a conciliatory policy towards Catholics in the face of the Socialist

[780] *La Voce della Verità*, 20 June 1890, 'Sacrilegi!'.
[781] *La Voce della Verità*, 24/25 June 1890, 'Dichiarazione del M. Bossi a proposito del '*Veggente*''.
[782] Michele Nani, 'Il Cristo di Bovio', pp.147-192.

threat, persuaded Guiccioli to use his powers as prefect to ban the play. A premiere was permitted and given in Naples in May 1894 by the company of Ermete Zacconi, in the face of more protest from the Church.[783] Although it is suggested by Guiccioli in his diaries that the operatic adaptation had been permitted, the atmosphere around the play in Rome clearly precluded its production as the opera was only premiered in Italy in Turin in 1904 where Bovio's supporters were proud of having resisted the Vatican pressure to ban the play in 1894 and celebrated the tenth anniversary of this through the opera's premiere.[784]

The Maestro of the Capella Sistina at the Costanzi

Towards the end of the 1890s, the widespread enthusiasm among theatre-going audiences for explicitly religious music in oratorio form, often on biblical subjects, which was enjoying a new European vogue, encountered similar friction with religious opinion from both the Catholic Church and a range of critical opinion in the Roman press. As we have seen in 1870s Venice, the performance of requiem masses in a secular setting was a novelty which only gradually overcame assumptions about appropriate settings for the non-liturgical performance of religious music. This even affected the trajectory of the works of the young piedmontese priest-composer, Lorenzo Perosi. He was called to be Maestro of the Sistine Chapel in 1898, just as his church music was being celebrated in Venice where he had run the Marciana chapel since 1894, as discussed in the previous chapter.[785] The first of Perosi's oratorios to be performed in opera houses, *La Risurezzione di Lazzaro*, was premiered at the Costanzi in December 1898. However, his early reception in Rome was problematic. Even Lionello Spada in the firmly liberal *Don Chisciotte* found a dissonance between the religious subject and the theatrical setting:

[783] Performances were permitted in Venice and Turin in 1894, but the play was banned by prefects in Brescia, Genova, Vercelli and Milan.
[784] Alessandro Guiccioli, 'Diario del 1894', *Nuova Antologia*, 1 January 1941, 167; *Diario di un Conservatore* (Milan: Edizioni del Borghese, 1973) p. 194. Ironically, Guiccioli was Crispi's replacement as Mayor of Rome following the sacking of the Catholic Torlonia.
[785] Maria Damerini, *Gli ultimi anni del Leone: Venezia 1929-1940*, (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 1988) p. 210.

> Above all I think that religious music shouldn't be performed in a theatre, not only out of respect for the Faith, but because you miss many of the essential aspects of religious music in a theatre. In fact, in Church the figures of the performers almost disappear, and it really seems as if the sound comes out of the saints on the walls. Whereas in the theatre, you have a singer in morning suit, who is supposed to be Christ. How can you not feel revulsion at such a situation? Thank goodness, when you're in the theatre there aren't other reminders of a different nature. But how are you supposed to forget, even for a moment, that on the same stage at the Costanzi, the evening before, Osaka had sung of love and Iris had committed suicide?[786]

The oratorio performance presented a problem for the Vatican. On the one hand, its young priest-composer, protégé of the Venetian Cardinal Patriarch Sarto (elected as Pope Pius X in August 1903), was a powerful tool in the Church's mission to re-evangelise society through the power of his religious music, which was viewed as a positive and orthodox artistic force. *L'Osservatore Romano* published two lengthy articles (signed A.T.) on the prospects for this "new movement of religious art", the first of which anticipated the possible effect of this infiltration of music inspired by faith and sacred liturgy on the secular world, and hoped that it might draw people back to the Church.[787] The second, a lengthy analysis of his compositions in the context of the history of oratorio and religious themes in non-liturgical works from Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives* to Wagner's *Parsifal*, argued it was impossible to fix a line between sacred and secular music. Yet the author still insisted on some stylistic delineations and boundaries between the sound worlds of religious music and melodrama. It praised Perosi's use and elevation of Gregorian chant, and urged Perosi to continue his mission, whilst warning him to avoid Wagnerian temptations:

> We don't hide from you the wish that in your future Oratorios, you make an effort to escape completely from the suggestive, sad and melancholy phrase, which ever hangs, like the *Sword of Damocles*, over all fashionable music,

[786] *Don Chisciotte*, 6 December 1898, L Spada, quoted in Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol. 1*, pp. 153-154.
[787] 'Dal teatro alla Chiesa', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 December 1898.

> under Wagnerian influence, particularly in the instrumentation, whose sound unfortunately becomes much *used and abused* in *Siegfried's Funeral March*, as for the *weaknesses of Manon*, and *for this real puppet who is Iris*! [Original italics preserved][788]

The essay was responding more to Perosi's *La Risurrezione di Cristo*, his oratorio which was not given at the Costanzi, but was originally planned for a religious space, to enable priests to attend. Cardinal Vicario Parocchi had emphasised to *L'Osservatore Romano* that the ban on priests attending public theatres remained in full force. Perosi, sadly, was also prevented from conducting his own work at the Costanzi or even attending the performance (unlike, for example, at the Fenice in Venice). This was, ostensibly, according to Spada in *Don Chisciotte*, because the Queen would be in attendance and the national anthem would be played, contrary to the continuing official legitimist stance of the Papacy.[789]

Sadly, there was a general consensus that the execution of *La Risurrezione di Lazzaro* was less than satisfactory, under-rehearsed, and given incomplete. Spada complained about the ambience of the theatre, that it wasn't helped by the fact that, unlike for secular performances (presumably he means of opera, and perhaps also concerts), where the lights were lowered, for the Perosi performance the house lights remained on full, which did not help in trying to forget the setting and the evening dress of the singers. *La Tribuna* praised the music for “its broad phrasing, handled with austerity, its admirable conception and its individual manner… but sadly it didn't have the success that it deserved".[790] *Il Messaggero* was more specific in its criticism

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[788] 'Arte Musicale: Gli Oratori di Perosi', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 December 1898. (See Appendix 1 Source 34) A.T. had reviewed Mascagni's *Iris* that same month from the same perspective of defending native Italian art from being overwhelmed by Wagnerian influence or resorting to Orientalist settings and stories. While praising Mascagni's progress as a composer in *Iris*, he confessed he couldn't hope that the new opera had a long life, 'Arte Musicale: A proposito dell'*Iris*', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26-27 November 1898 (A.T.).
[789] *Don Chisciotte*, 6 December 1898; The performance of non-liturgical oratorios in concert in churches, while permitted in Rome, still became a point of controversy within the Catholic Church during these years as the press highlighted different rules in force in different diocese, for example Cardinal Richard of Paris banned the concert performance of oratorios in Church, causing a dispute between the clerical *La Voce della Verità* and the radical *Il Giorno* about the consistency of dogma within the Catholic Church, 'Chiesa e Teatro', *La Voce della Verità*, 23 January 1900.
[790] *La Tribuna*, 6 December 1898.

of the soloists and chorus, who were, variously, out of time, inaccurate and seemingly unaware or understanding of what they were singing.[791] *La Fanfulla* joked that the public's reaction justified Cardinal Parocchi's prohibition on priests attending the theatre to witness "this attack perpetrated against their illustrious colleague".[792]

Notwithstanding these negative reactions to the performance at the Costanzi, the city of Rome was also determined to honour Perosi, despite him being an employee of the Vatican, rather than holding any musical position in the city of Rome. At its meeting on 19 December, Councillor Persichetti, requested that the City's congratulations be conveyed to Perosi, because:

> Rome shouldn't be second to any city, when Italian genius is being honoured, and he hoped that the Council would want to associate itself in giving praise to the young and already illustrious maestro. The President responded that the response of councillors on all benches, indicated a unanimous agreement to signal their esteem for one who raises high the pride of Italy across the country, and will carry it also abroad; and take the trouble to write to maestro Perosi, conveying the congratulations of the Consiglio Comunale of Rome.[793]

The letter, from the Mayor, Prince Emanuele Ruspoli, interestingly, focuses more on Perosi's musical genius and contribution to Italian art, rather than the religious qualities or subject matter of his oratorios.[794] Notwithstanding such municipal honour, this single concert was the only Perosi oratorio given in a Roman opera house until 1902, unlike in other cities where multiple performances were given, and others of his oratorios followed quickly. The cause of this hiatus is hard to determine, but it is plausible that Perosi, under pressure from the Vatican, resisted opportunities for further Roman performances in light of the perceived encroachment of the world of opera on its doorstep and the continuing concern about performance of oratorios in the theatre. In 1902, however, the atmosphere decisively shifted. Perosi's *Mosè* was

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[791] *Il Messaggero*, 6 December 1898. (See Appendix 1 Source 35)
[792] *Il Fanfulla*, 6 December 1898.
[793] Archivio Capitolino, Atti del Consiglio Comunale (ACC), 19 December 1898. (See Appendix 1 Source 36)
[794] Archivio Capitolino, Titolario Post-Unitario, 6, b.34.f1, 'Congratulazioni e ringraziamento del Maestro Perosi'.

given five times in April that year, repeated in 1903. Perosi was permitted to attend, as well as many other members of the clergy. In 1904, Holy Week saw the local premiere of a 'sacred cantata', *Isaia*, by Luigi Mancinelli, then a Perosi double-bill for Easter week of the world premiere of *Il Giudizio Universale* alongside his *Stabat Mater*.[795] Perosi himself directed the performances, and *La Tribuna* recorded a large turnout of priests in every tier of the theatre.[796] Venice's clerical newspaper, *La Difesa*, reported on the Roman concert that among the audience were the whole of Roman aristocracy, the flower of society, as well as artists, musicians, diplomats, critics from across Italy and abroad, including many tourists, particularly Germans (though no specific mention of the clerical audience). On the stage was constructed a platform capable of seating more than four hundred choristers, mostly female, to give voice to the chorus of angels.[797]

The 'Perosi-craze' exhibited several tensions in the evolution of attitudes to religion in opera which are magnified in the context of Rome. The Church felt its inability to police the performance of non-liturgical music beyond its own churches. The enthusiasm of ordinary Catholics and non-adherents for both the religious and humanistic aspects of oratorio, while it might encourage a return to devotion, also risked the polluting influence of melodrama, through the juxtaposition of oratorios alongside morally suspect operas in a theatre, where emotional responses could easily be blurred. Conversely, although the Church in Rome allowed oratorio performance in church, questions were raised about the consistency of this with the principles of the Caecilian movement which reformed and sought to purify liturgical music. The prohibition on women singing in Church choirs was reinforced only in 1904, which would be thrown into sharper relief by the use of Churches as concert spaces with female choruses. The spectacle of massed-ranks of female choristers imitating an angelic chorus in either church or opera house, and *prime donne* singing Iris one night, and the biblical Marta or Maria the next, in the same theatre, offered women different perspectives on female agency within the musical performance of religion. It also implicitly challenged the Church's position on female liturgical singing.

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[795] Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera vol. 1*, p. 217.
[796] *La Tribuna*, 10 April 1904 (s.m.)
[797] Quoted in Merlatti, *Lorenzo Perosi*, p. 160.

Tosca and the meaning of religion in *Roma Capitale*

The description of the heterogeneous composition of the Costanzi audience for Perosi's *Mosè* in 1904 reminds us that the theatre had now entrenched its position as the foremost opera house in a Rome which had been transformed, at least in size, after thirty years as the Capital of the new nation. The economic and political crises, and now colonial misadventures which afflicted Liberal Italy, made the physical transformation of Rome, with monumentalising edifices to the new Italy, a rather ironic counterpoint.[798] As well as the development of the Viminale and the opening up of Via Nazionale, off which the Costanzi stood, this process of urban development, particularly in the Prati district in the shadow of Castel Sant' Angelo, was initially controversial, even heretical or revolutionary.[799] It was another physical demonstration that the walls of pontifical Rome no longer delineated the boundary of the city. A clerical supporter, Camillo Ravioli, bemoaned that "If we wanted to tear down everything in Rome that recalls the domain of the priest, goodbye Rome".[800] Despite the new residential districts, monumental focal points and newly exposed ancient ruins, urban planners did little to impose unity or homogeneity over the ancient polycentric pattern of Rome's quarters and hills. In John Agnew's assessment, no one epoch predominated: "Rome's uniqueness lies in the plurality of aesthetic effects and interpretations that it engenders". Agnew quotes Georg Simmel's observation of Rome in 1898 that it can "still be experienced in multiple ways and this sentiment can be interpreted in many manners".[801]

These multiple perspectives would have been familiar responses among the Perosi audiences in the Costanzi theatre. As well as the juxtaposition of secular melodrama

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[798] Agnew points out that there are different assessments of the extent to which Rome was transformed through planning and redevelopment, particularly in comparison to Milan, or other European capitals like Paris, see John Agnew, 'The Impossible Capital: Monumental Rome under Liberal and Fascist Regimes 1870-1943', *Geografiska Annaler*. Series B, Human Geography, 80:4 (1998), p. 231.
[799] Where the Constitutional Court, known as the Palazzaccio, "the ugly palace", rivals the Vittoriano in Piazza Venezia for its gross monumentalism, and whose construction sprawled over more than twenty years spanning the turn of the century (1889-1911); Caracciolo, *Roma Capitale*, p.96.
[800] Ibid., p. 96.
[801] G. Simmel, 'Roma, un'analisi estetica', *La Critica Sociologica* (1996) 116, p. 7, quoted in Agnew, 'The Impossible Capital', p. 238.

with oratorio, the years between the performance of *Lazzaro* in 1898, which received such conflicted and critical responses, and the adulation given to *Mosè* in 1904, saw the premiere of another new opera to present a prominent narrative of the Church in Rome - Puccini's *Tosca*. Much has been written about the Roman specificity and historical research involved in Puccini's adaptation of Sardou's popular play, but little has said about the significance of the religious aspects of Tosca in the context of *Roma Capitale*, of the new Rome of 1900, as opposed to the historical Rome of 1800 that was supposedly being staged.[802] I propose to review interpretations of Puccini's *Tosca* through this lens.

Tosca the opera failed to garner the immediate plaudits from 'serious' music critics that his previous operas had. Many of these judged the premiere harshly for what they perceived as a music-less percussive sound-world, highlighting the extraneous use of bells and other acoustic effects.[803] The music critic of *La Tribuna*, Rastignac (the pseudonym of Vincenzo Morello), was prominent among negative assessments of *Tosca* as too melodramatic, and the story unsuited to operatic adaptation.[804] One of the few recent analyses to consider the reception of Tosca in its contemporary urban context is Arman Schwartz's reference to literature about the changing significance of bells in the industrialising urban centres of the late nineteenth century. Schwartz quotes several critics of *Tosca* – particularly from the Socialist journal *Avanti!* – whose correspondent reported that:

> the public's coldness persisted in the first part of the third act, so that the prelude, the re-awakening of Rome, with the sound of bells, the shepherd's interlude, and the Roman dialect refrain, passed by in silence.[805]

More sarcastically, the liberal *Fanfulla della Domenica* sneered:

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[802] For a meticulous comparison of the opera, its compositional process and the Rome of 1800, see Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*.
[803] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, pp. 86-88. This conclusion was also taken up by the next generation of Italian composers, for example see *Ildebrando Pizzetti, Musicisti Contemporanei: Saggi Critici* (Milano: Treves, 1914) pp. 90-94.
[804] *La Tribuna*, 16 January 1900.
[805] La Tosca di G. Puccini, *Avanti!*, 16 January 1900, quoted in Arman Schwartz, 'Rough Music: Tosca and verismo reconsidered', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 31 No. 3, Spring 2008, pp. 228-244.

> But if at the beginning of the century, Rome had really been so atrociously infested with the sound of bells, it would have been quickly depopulated. Who, but for a few deaf people, would have been able to live there?[806]

Schwartz glosses these negative assessments with his own conclusion of what he considers "the most anticlerical of operas", that: "despite, or rather because of the massive empirical effort expended on realistic scene painting, the final result is curiously unmoving, dead."[807] Susan Vandiver Nicassio, in her historicist analysis of *Tosca's* 1800 setting, concurs about the anticlerical nature of the opera.[808] While these present interesting new interpretations of the setting and sound-world of *Tosca*, they do not essentially deviate from the assessments of Mosco Carner that the premiere of *Tosca* was problematic because of its essential anticlericalism in the heart of Catholicism. Carner suggests the opera "threw an odd light on the Catholic Church and would probably go against the grain of many spectators, to say nothing of the Vatican".[809] Yet this consensus seems not to take into account sources which might illuminate the reaction of Catholics or the Church, or consider the broader response to the religious themes.

Many correspondents reported very positive reactions from the audience, or as with Ippolito Valetta in *L'Opinione* determined, rightly as it turned out, that further performances would be more warmly received.[810] By the third performance on 19 January, even Rastignac's own paper, *La Tribuna*, was reporting "the success of *Tosca*". Significantly, it said that among the encored pieces was "the exquisite prelude to act three, which, unfairly, was received in silence on the opening night".[811] This suggests a rather different perspective on the reception of the prelude depicting the Roman dawn in the fields around Castel Sant' Angelo, with the shepherd boy

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[806] Giorgio Barini, 'Tosca's melodramma di G. Puccini', *Fanfulla della Domenica*, 21 January 1990, quoted in Schwartz, 'Tosca and verismo', p. 237.
[807] Ibid., pp. 228, 237.
[808] Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Rome*, p. 1.
[809] Carner, *Giacomo Puccini: Tosca* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985) p. 64.
[810] *L'Opinione*, 16 January 1900.
[811] "lo squisito preludio del terzo atto, che ingiustamente era passato sotto silenzio la prima sera", *La Tribuna*, 20 January 1900.

singing, and the bells of his flock, the dome of St Peter's clearly in view in Adolfo Hohenstein's backcloth.[812]

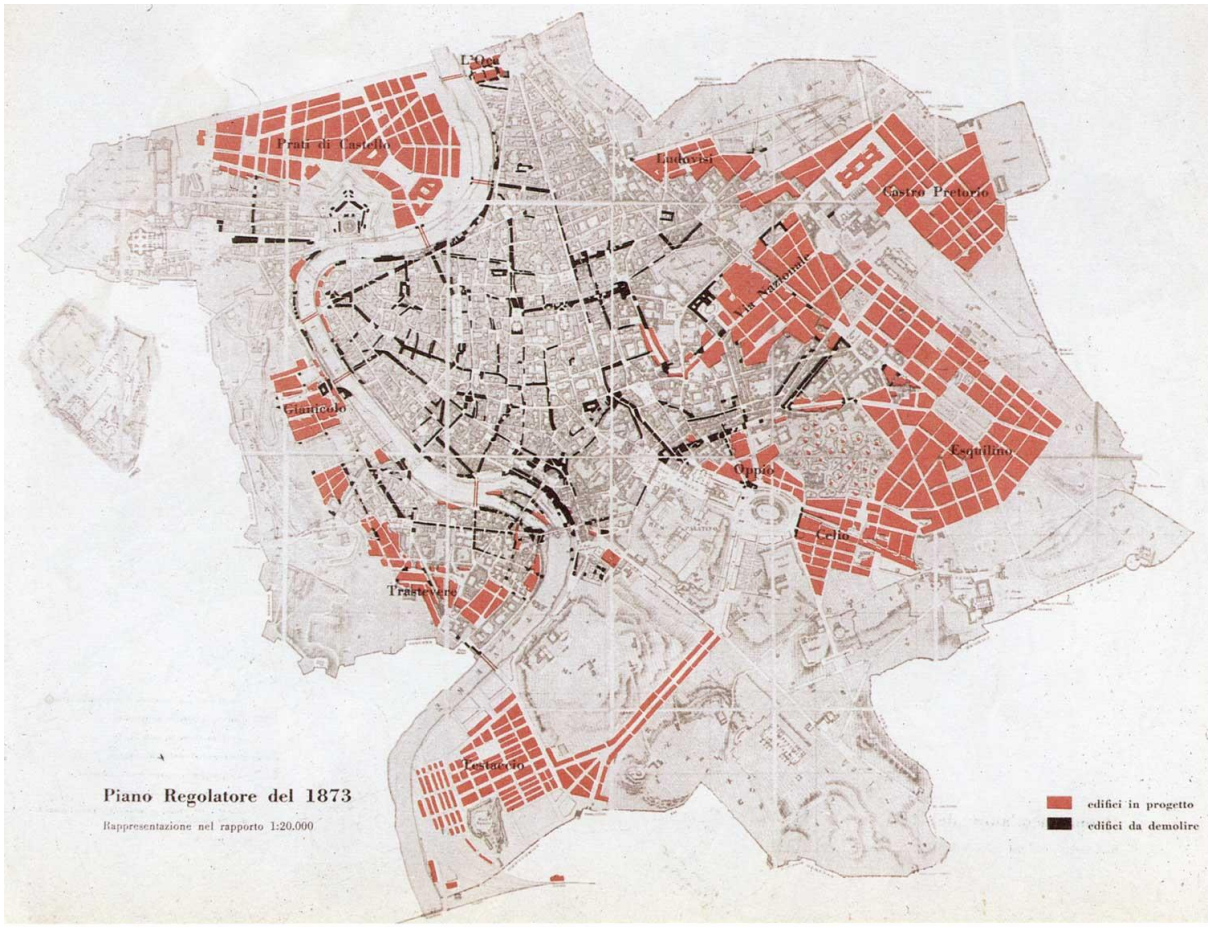
[812] The position of the dome of St. Peter's in the centre of the picture from the terrace of Castel Sant'Angelo was one of the pieces of artistic licence which Hohenstein used, in order to bring St Peter's clearly into view the angle between the Castle and the Vatican had to be adjusted.

Fig. 50 Tosca, Bozzetto, Act III (Adolfo Hohenstein). ASCR CON000083

By 1900 this area, the Prati di Castello, was a sea of new mansion and office blocks, and the sprawling half-built Corte di Cassazione, but as late as the last years of the 1880s, it was still a semi-rural idyll, which attracted Romans for bathing and recreation amidst fields and vineyards in the shadow of the walls of the Castle and St Peter's. For parts of the Roman audience, those with nostalgic memories of pontifical Rome, or an outsider's appreciation of it, Hohenstein and Puccini's depiction referenced not only a historical anachronism of 1800, but also the lived memory of Romans and visitors to the city of only a generation before. One way to observe this perspective is through the watercolours of Ettore Roesler Franz, juxtaposed with what we know about the original production and its reception. Roesler Franz, "Roman by birth and tongue", was a descendent of eighteenth-century Bohemian immigrants.[813] Over two decades from 1876 he documented through photography scenes of the transformation of Rome, including the destruction of bridges, villas, churches and theatres, the embanking of the Tiber and the daily life of Romans experiencing these seismic changes. Many of these vanishing scenes he translated into three series of watercolours, *Roma pittoresca* which have come to be known as *Roma spartita*. These were progressively bought by the City of Rome, much to the chagrin of rival artists who considered them technically weak. The third series was exhibited at the Teatro Nazionale in 1897, just three years before the premiere of *Tosca*. Among the areas he documented was the Prati. An 1873 map of the first post-unification plan for the redevelopment of Rome, shows the proposed blocks of the Prati district, as well as the embanking of the Tiber which would result in the demolition of the Apollo theatre opposite, and on the Viminale, Via Nazionale and Via Torino – the location of the new Costanzi.

[813] Maria Elisa Tittoni, 'Ettore Roesler Franz: 'romano per nascita e per lingua'' in Tittoni, Federica Pirani and Maria Paola Fornasiero (eds.), *Paesaggi della Memoria: Gli acquerelli romani di Ettore Roesler Franz dal 1876 al 1895* (Roma: Mandragora, 2004) pp. 11-15.

Fig. 51 Rome, Piano Regolatore Viviani (1873)[814]



[814] The areas shaded pink indicate proposed new development, and the areas shaded black those for demolition. The top left section shows clearly the Prati district.

At the same time Roesler Franz was creating watercolours of the vanishing semi-rural landscape around Castel Sant'Angelo, two of which illustrate this alternative perspective on the prelude to Act III of *Tosca*. The first of these gives some idea how isolated and imposing the Castle was barely a decade and a half before the end of the nineteenth century.[815]

[815] It is possible to imagine the boat down the Tiber to Ostia as an alternative escape route for the lovers in *Tosca*, to outsmart Scarpia's spies who are expecting them to travel via Civitavecchia as discussed in Act II when he writes the safe passage for them.

Fig. 52 Ettore Roesler Franz, Il Tevere e Castel Sant'Angelo (1885). © Roma – Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali – Museo di Roma in Trastevere.

A second Roesler Franz watercolour brings us closer to my central point, that Catholics, Roesler Franz was himself devout, could make a direct link between the stage picture of the terrace the Castle, with its slightly skewed, but otherwise recognisable depiction of the skyline of St Peter's, the sound world Puccini creates, the gathering dawn, church bells, the shepherd's song, and sheep’s bells, with their recent memory. This is best conveyed from the recreation of the original Hohenstein designs by Rome Opera in 2015, directed by Alessandro Talevi. On the following page is the tableau at the point the shepherd boy sings his song:

Io de' sospiri.	I give you sighs,
Ve ne rimanno tanti	there are as many
pe' quante foje	as there are leaves
ne smoveno li venti.	driven by the wind.
Tu me disprezzi. Me ciaccoro.	You may scorn me, and my heart is sick.
Lampena d'oro, me fai morir.	Oh lamp of gold, I die for you.

Fig. 53 *Tosca*, Act III, prelude. Teatro dell'Opera di Roma (2015)

The author of the sonnet was the romanesco poet Giggi Zanazzo, another example of that meticulous research which the authors conducted to create the effects of liturgy and costume to connote 1800 Rome.[816] It is entirely plausible that Roesler Franz attended the opening of *Tosca* in January 1900, and 'heard' his own painting of a shepherd boy by the banks of the Tiber with his sheep. This time he is courting a young girl, and we might say he is rather older than the unbroken voice of Puccini's shepherd boy, but the parallel is nonetheless striking.

[816] Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, p. 159.

Fig. 54 Ettore Roseler Franz, Ai Prati di Castello – S. Carlo al fondo (1889) © Roma – Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali – Museo di Roma Trastevere.

In any case, the effect, for this part of the audience, and the correspondent of *Il Messaggero*, was anything but "curiously unmoving, dead". Lost perhaps, but not dead. One point of consensus was the immediate success of the finale of Act I. *Il Messaggero* was most expansive about it:

> The Te Deum, which ends happily the first act, is a work of genius by Puccini. The liturgical song, the powerful Christian hymn – accompanied by organ, bells and the orchestra – soars up high on wings, achieving a rare fullness, a sonority, an expansion of sound unheard of… also admired was the staging which was truly lavish, and the religious procession in its colourful costumes… it was received with enthusiastic acclaim by the audience who wanted an encore.[817]

Michele Girardi and Eugenio Gara conjecture that Zanazzo might also have been the author of an anonymous sonnet published in a Catholic daily *La Vera Roma*, the week after the premiere, which would reinforce this sense of Catholic influence on the atmosphere.[818]

> If these liberals want to sing
> And call us diehards and reactionaries
> It's enough to listen to Puccini's Tosca
> To say that these are gross errors!
>
> What a job for the orchestra and violins,
> What delicious and original themes!
> But the best and finest ideas
> Are really the clerical ones.
>
> Puccini is an artist and a good friend,
> To see everyone so enthused,
> You'd have to recall the old times!
>
> The pieces which made the biggest impression
> In fact, my son, which were they?
> Three: Bells, Te-Deum and Procession!!

[817] *Il Messaggero*, 16 January 1900. (See Appendix 1 Source 37)
[818] *La Vera Roma*, 21 January 1900, quoted in Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini*, pp. 164-165. (See Appendix 1 Source 38)

Yet neither they, nor others who cite this piece, like Vandiver Nicassio, have questioned the author's intent in the context of a Catholic reading of the opera, and who might be the object of its satire.[819] While scholars seem content that it fits their view of the opera as anticlerical, its publication in an avowedly Catholic paper, *La Vera Roma*, surely suggests a Catholic reading in which the satire is actually directed at the world of *verismo* opera for needing to resort to familiar religious tropes for its success.

If we examine the response of the clerical press elsewhere to *Tosca*, we encounter some problems. The first of these is that *L'Osservatore Romano* was going through one of its phases of ignoring the theatre, and has nothing to say about the premiere of *Tosca*, for reasons which again it is difficult to ascertain.[820] *La Voce della Verità*'s defence of the values and authority of the Church exhibits two of its main preoccupations in an editorial shortly after the end of the first run of *Tosca* in March 1900. It fulminated about the iniquities of anticlerical and immoral performances in the popular theatre, but sought to promote a sense of the indivisibility of *cattolicismo* and *romanità.*[821] So although it concurred with much of the lukewarm and negative assessment that *Tosca* was a step backwards for Puccini as a composer, among the few highlights it singled out the Te Deum: "the only point in the evening which generated real enthusiasm was the grand finale of the first act".[822] In this reading, Hohenstein and Puccini, without any anticlerical implications, were giving a musical and visual demonstration of the fusion of Catholicism and Rome. For the performance on 11 February, accompanied children were to be admitted free of charge, hardly an indication that anything morally suspect was to be encountered.[823] The final performance on 17 February, for which *La Tribuna* reported there was not

[819] Vandiver Nicassio, *Tosca's Roma*, p. 1. She also quotes the anonymous poem at the same time as insisting on the anticlerical nature of the opera.
[820] Even when theatre reviews do re-commence in *L'Osservatore Romano*, it is predominantly of prose theatre, and very brief in nature. There is a noticeable gap in its coverage of opera at the Costanzi until 1908.
[821] 'Romanità, *La Voce della Verità*, 6 March 1900.
[822] "si entusiasmò veramente, l'unica volta nella serata, al grandioso finale del primo atto", *La Voce della Verità*, 16 January 1900.
[823] *Il Messaggero*, 11 February 1900.

an empty seat anywhere in the theatre, was deemed a complete triumph. The Te Deum was, once again, encored.[824]

This is quite a change in the few years since religious processions on stage were anathema to official Catholic opinion. There are potentially several explanations for this. Clearly the Catholic press, influenced by the Vatican, lagged behind the tastes of its core Catholic audience who increasingly failed to register any qualms about seeing liturgy represented on the stage. Secondly, although tensions over the Roman question continued to erupt into the twentieth century, the rise of Christian Democracy and the broader Catholic revival meant that the sense of siege which Catholic Romans had felt in the early years after unification had subsided. Finally, as was discussed in chapter II, analysis of the detailed planning of the Te Deum procession from the original production shows how this might have been interpreted as foregrounding a conventional, Catholic perspective as much as the religious bigotry of Scarpia.

From Sant'Andrea della Valle to the Grail Hall

The years following the premiere of *Tosca* saw a succession of revived and new operas deploying a range of religious themes and liturgical settings which drew consistently warm reception from Catholic and liberal publications. Shortly after the conclusion of the final performance of *Tosca* in 1900, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* returned to the Roman stage for the first time in fourteen years, when it had last been given at the now demolished Apollo. As Roman audiences had for so many years been considered among the most conservative, the historical position of this opera in Italian repertoire, discussed in *La Tribuna*, indicates how perceptions had changed. The critic laments the prohibition on *Parsifal*, but recognises how far ahead of its time *Tannhäuser* was when it was composed, during the time of *Il Trovatore* and four year's before Meyerbeer's *Il Profeta*.[825] Sadly, we do not find specific comment about *Tannhäuser's* pilgrimage to Rome and his wonder at the bells and anthems of the

[824] *La Tribuna*, 17 February 1900.
[825] *La Tribuna*, 11 April 1900; *Il Messaggero*, 10 April 1900.

city, though one can imagine that for many in the Roman audience, the parallels with the Te Deum in *Tosca* would be recent, obvious and felicitous, even if the Papacy itself is also cast in a less than favourable light in Wagner's opera. As elsewhere beyond Bayreuth, *Parsifal* would not reach the Roman stage until January 1914, when it would unite clerical and liberal opinion in its favour. During the first decade of the twentieth century, as discussed above, the clerical press evolved to reflect the reconfiguration of Catholic activism and the relaxation of the *Non Expedit*, as the clerico-moderate alliance solidified. The more intransigent daily papers like *La Voce della Verità* were gradually superseded by *Il Corriere d'Italia* and *Il Giornale di Roma*, which reflected these changed among the Catholic readership.[826] *L'Osservatore Romano*, having eschewed theatrical coverage for the early part of the opening decade of the twentieth century, by 1914 was publishing extensive coverage of the *Parsifal* premiere, as will be discussed below, with signed articles and reviews.

Ecclesiastical settings, rites and pilgrimage, having for so long been seen as local colour, or historical anachronisms, could now be enjoyed in Rome for their subjective religious significance. Romans did not have to take literally Rastignac's lament in 1907 that "Italy had gone to sleep liberal and awoken clerical", to concur that despite the continuing urban development and policies of the national government, the Church's role was still highly visible and increasingly vibrant once more, and the number of churches, parishes and those in religious orders growing.[827] *Tosca* revivals abounded, with seventeen performances in 1902, fifteen in 1904 and sixteen in 1908 at the Costanzi. Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, at least, made his (unsuccessful) pilgrimage to Rome. Likewise Aligi in *La Figlia di Iorio*, D'Annunzio's drama and libretto adaptation for Alberto Franchetti, makes his vow to follow the chorus of pilgrims from the mountains of the Abruzzo to beg absolution from the Pope. The Roman premiere of Franchetti's opera in April 1907, a year after its disappointing opening at La Scala, failed to overturn the consensus of the critics that Franchetti's music failed to match the power of D'Annunzio's wildly popular original play, or add new qualities through the music. However, apart from this negative comparison between the words and the music by Edoardo Pompeo in *Il Messaggero*, other

[826] Malgeri, *La stampa cattolica*, p. 10.
[827] Caracciolo, *Roma Capitale*, pp.270-271; *La Tribuna*, 31 March 1907.

Roman reviews were far more enthusiastic and reported a warm response from the audience. Gino Monaldi in the Catholic *Il Corriere d'Italia*, which in general found little in the music to praise apart from the treatment of some of the ensembles, which reminded him of Donizetti, reported excellent execution, and by the second performance, a full and enthusiastic responses from the audience.[828] Meanwhile *La Tribuna*'s Giorgio Barini was more positive than most, he found the pilgrims' chorus of Act II as they cross the Apennines on their way to Papal Rome, sing a Marian hymn, "of a sincere, popular nature, which grew in intensity as they drew near, and faded as they moved away.[829]

The same month Cilea's *Gloria*, a fourteenth-century tale of love, conquest and chivalry, with shades of both *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Francesca da Rimini*, was premiered at Milan's La Scala. Alan Mallach observes that Cilea's timid move into more epic territory than his earlier success with the decorous *Adriana Lecouvreur*, epitomised the *giovane scuola's* increasingly unequal battle with more advanced modernist trends, principally from abroad.[830] Strauss's *Salome* had been given in Turin and Milan in 1906 and Naples in 1907. It reached Rome in the same season as *Gloria*, during the Carnival/Quaresima 1908. However, even *Gloria*'s Milan premiere received considerable coverage in the Roman press, particularly by the clerical *Il Corriere d'Italia*, which gave over two and a half full columns to analysis of the libretto and the intentions of the composer by its correspondent G. Mussio. There is no sense of incongruity between the ecclesiastical setting and the medieval vendetta plot, and Mussio relishes the liturgical setting of Act III which opens in Siena Cathedral, with the bishop blessing the people and intoning the beginning of the *Magnificat*, accompanied by the obligatory organ and bells.[831] Mussio reproduced the lines of her dying aria, which exhibit the conventional religiosity and Marian references familiar since the days of Verdi.[832] When *Gloria* reached the Teatro Costanzi in February 1908, it was in general considered weak by Barini in *La Tribuna*

[828] *Il Corriere d'Italia*, 8 April, 11 April 15 April 1907.
[829] *La Tribuna*, 8 April, 11 April, 13 April, 1907 ("di schietto carattere popolare, chi va aumentando d'intensità con l'avvicinarsi del coro, e si va perdendo poi in lontananza").
[830] Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, pp. 260-261.
[831] See chapter II for discussion of the Magnificat scene.
[832] *Il Corriere d'Italia*, 13 April 1907, G. Mussio. (See Appendix 1 Source 39)

and no improvement gained from changes made since its premiere.[833] Yet *L'Osservatore Romano* managed to praise the richness of the staging including "the solemn Cathedral of Siena, reproduced in the most complete and perfect fashion".[834] Although only a short review of one hundred and fifty words, it is particularly noteworthy as *L'Osservatore Romano* had been steadfastly ignoring opera performance for several years as we have seen. This silence about Rome's foremost theatre is difficult to explain at a time when other Catholic journals were giving increasing space to their art and music columns. *L'Osservatore* passed over the Rome premiere of Strauss's *Salomé*, a few weeks after *Gloria*, unlike the Catholic press elsewhere, for example in Venice, which took a firm stance against its perceived depravity. That is until its performance on Palm Sunday (12 April) at which a thin crowd was reported, perhaps a slight hint of *schadenfreude* at a work of which it disapproved. Yet in *Il Corriere d'Italia* the composer and critic Alessandro Parisotti, was more than even-handed about a work which he explained divided opinion fiercely, but whose originality and breaking of existing operatic forms could not be denied.[835]

Just a few weeks before *Gloria*'s premiere, *L'Osservatore* published its most extensive theatre review for many years, with a three-column report on the Roman premiere at the Teatro Argentina of D'Annunzio's stage play, *La Nave*, with incidental music by Ildebrando Pizzetti. *La Nave* presented another expression of D'Annunzio's fascination with primitive Italian Christianity contrasting with his Abruzzian peasants in *La Figlia Di Iorio*. The setting was sixth-century Venice, intended as a metaphor for the renaissance of Italy's imperial mission, to which the Catholic religion was yoked as a vital element in his vision. The story centres on a vendetta involving a pagan woman, Basiliola seducing two Venetian brothers, one of whom is a Christian bishop. *L'Osservatore Romano* failed to warm to the heady mixture, condemning both its mistreatment of historical truth, and its morally suspect society, thereby

[833] *La Tribuna*, 6 February 1908.
[834] "il solenne Duomo di Siena, nel modo più completo e più perfetto", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 February 1908.
[835] *Il Corriere d'Italia*, 11 March, 13 March 1908. Parisotti, sadly was more interested in attacking Strauss's use of an accordian than giving much detailed analysis of the opera and its execution; Nicola D'Atri, in *Il Giornale d'Italia* described the shocked but positive response of the audience and attempted to isolate the Straussian method, 10 March 1908.

attacking both the now rather dated 'slice of life' dramas which the *giovane scuola* had created since *Cavalleria Rusticana*, as well as the decadent tastes of D'Annunzio:

> [this vendetta] might have been likely in ancient Rome in a deserted corner of Suburra [the overcrowded lower-class area and red-light district], or in modern Rome in a quiet little street between two *low-life (mala vita)* factions which attack each other with knives over a fallen woman… we can't resile from condemning once again that D'Annunzio, in the setting of his scenes, at many points things are taken too far, and have unfortunately an educational and moral potential which touches rashly on matters sacred and revered…[836]

Despite this revulsion at D'Annunzio's historical and moral vision, the reviewer (identified only by the initials G.A.) found much to admire in both the staging and the positive contribution of the incidental music by Pizzetti, including the religious hymns and the *Allelujah* with which the ship is finally launched at the conclusion of the play. The correspondent also enjoyed a satirical joke at the expense of the new anticlerical Mayor of Rome, Ernesto Nathan, an Anglo-Italian Jew.[837] Nathan's *blocco popolare*, uniting all the anticlerical factions within the City, came to power in 1907 with the express purpose of overturning the Catholic conception of Rome, and instituting a city which would symbolise secular ethical values, pursued through educational and social reform, much like Selvatico's short-lived experiment in Venice. According to the review Nathan, from his box:

> observed the final majestic descent of the *ship* over the waves, thinking sadly about his own *vessel*, hardly yet launched and already full of leaks, taking on water from all sides![838]

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[836] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 January 1908 (G.A.). (See Appendix 1 Source 40)
[837] Ernesto Nathan lived in an apartment facing the Teatro Costanzi on Via Torino.
[838] "Dal suo palco assisteva allo spettacolo il sindaco Nathan, che vedendo sull'ultimo scendere maestosamente la nave sulle onde, pensava melanconicamente alla sua, che può dirsi non ancora varata, e già piena di falle e fa acqua da tutte le parte!", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 January 1908.

While Nathan's left-wing, secularist politics and Jewish, Masonic background made him a natural enemy of the Catholic press (as we saw earlier with the antisemitic tone of reporting in the 1870s), there was a more benign view of him among clerics. According to Romano Ugolini's biographical essay on Nathan, the great historian of Church and State in modern Italy, Arturo Carlo Jemolo, recalled a few years after Nathan's death that a Roman Catholic intransigent had spoken to him of the general respect in which he and his other Catholics held Nathan's administration.[839] Yet *L'Osservatore*'s diagnosis of an administration listing badly proved wide of the mark. Only in 1913 did Ernesto Nathan's *blocco popolare* break up and was replaced by an increasingly cohesive demo-clerical coalition of religious conservatives.[840]

[839] Romano Ugolini, *Ernesto Nathan tra idealità e pragmatismo* (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 2003) p. 20.
[840] *Mario Belardinelli*, I cattolici nella vita politica romana, in Istituto per la storia del risorgimento italiano, *Roma nell'età Giolittiana: L'amministrazione Nathan, Atti del Convegno di Studio (Roma, 28-30 maggio 1984)* (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1986) pp. 1-36.

The Roman Parsifal

Emma Carelli was much praised in the Roman press for bringing *Parsifal* to the Costanzi simultaneously with Bologna (less the one hour later start time), and other European cities, as the first staged productions to beat the expired ban on productions beyond Bayreuth. Its universal, ecstatic reception has no parallel among opera in this period. While this was a reaction repeated elsewhere in this European 'Parsifal Year', its reception in Rome highlights several conditions about religion and opera in Rome that have been discussed in this chapter. As we saw in Venice, Rome was hardly the only city, or even Italian city, where the Catholic theological allusions within the opera were celebrated and taken as confirmation of religious truth, and Wagner's intentions, without any need to refer to those of his cryptic statements on the meaning of the ending that "it brings to our consciousness the innermost essence of Religion free from all dogmatic fictions".[841] Eugenio Giovanetti, correspondent of *Il Resto del Carlino*, distinguished between the Milan and Bologna productions that the former was "Catholic and Latin" while the latter was "Christian and universal", between them he coined the name the "Italian Parsifal", which he thought (with what comparative evidence is not clear) "the most enchanting Parsifal in the world".[842] The debate about Wagner's actual dogmatic intentions had raged in Germany and beyond since its premiere. Friedrich Nietzsche had condemned its theatrical, Catholic trappings. Yet Germans seeking the resolution of the country's Kulturkampf between Protestantism and Catholicism often welcomed *Parsifal* as the ideal union of these doctrines in a modern Germany.[843] In Rome, while the influence of Wagner's Lutheran heritage was referenced, any sense that the symbolism, doctrine or music might have non-Catholic qualities, was largely ignored.

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[841] Richard H Bell, *Wagner's Parsifal: an appreciation in light of his theological journey* (Oregon: Cascade, 2013) p. 293.
[842] Katherine R Syer, 'Parsifal on Stage' in William Kindemann, Katherine Rae Syer eds., *A Companion to Wagner's Parsifal* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005) p.292. For an example of the way in which Italians interpreted the leitmotivic structure of Parsifal, see the diagrammatic analysis of the score published in 1914 in Guglielmo Bassi, *Parsifal, Dramma mistico in tre atti. Traduzione ritmica dal testo originale tedesco di Giovanni Pozza. Guida tematica illustrativa compilata dal Dott. Guglielmo Bassi* (Milano: Ricordi, 1914), quoted in Giangiorgio Satrangi, *Il Parsifal di Wagner: Testo, musica, teologia* (Torino: EDT, 2017) p. 107.
[843] James Kennaway, 'Degenerate Religion and Masculinity in Parsifal reception', *Current Musicology*, no. 88 (Fall, 2009) pp. 37-41.

In Rome, the Catholic *Il Corriere d'Italia* was proud to report that the first extract of *Parsifal* to be performed in Italy had been the Prelude, in Rome on 2 March 1883 and the first performance of the Grail scene from Act III in the Sala Costanzi in March 1884.[844] *L'Osservatore Romano*, in common with other Catholic as well as liberal publications heralded the premiere and further performances with multiple pages of literary and philosophical previews, as well as reviews of the performances. *L'Osservatore Romano* took Wagner's message as a demonstration both of Christian truth, and the religious transfiguration of his supreme pagan hero, Siegfried.

> In Parsifal are united all the manifestations of Christianity, the ecstatic joy of the spirit and the mystical emotions of the Catholic rites… In Parsifal a divine idea soars up through great technical skill and an ideal becomes a hymn of redemption which lifts off towards the eternal sky, crowning the triumph of Siegfried turned towards God…
>
> Christianity proclaims the divinity of the words: *Joy is suffering because suffering is joy*, and by extoling Man, Wagner reprises this theme and writes his Christian dogma… And Parsifal is truly the transfiguration of Siegfried.[845]

Even liberal publications relished the humanistic messages within the opera and the indebtedness to Roman Catholicism. Alberto Gasco, in *La Tribuna*, was transported:

> … Wagner, staging the mysteries of the Christian faith may have managed with his genius, with the chants and rich harmonies which convey the dramatic vision, to erase the doubt which gnaws even the spirit of the believer, and would work, by supreme virtue of his art, the unbeliever to sense the intangible feeling of the mystical dream.
>
> Already the prelude, which through its melodic themes depicts a symphonic poem of the three Holy virtues, Faith, Hope and Love, puts you in a spirit

[844] *Il Corriere d'Italia*, 1 January 1914.
[845] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 January 1914. (See Appendix 1 Source 41)

> ready for the mystical spectacle. And this unfolds visually, like the sacred plays of another age, marvellous to behold, profound for the mind. Through the scenic transformations for the Christian rites, the enchantments of the ancient mysteries are renewed…
>
> The audience left full of wonder or of fear… wanting to celebrate the mystery of Grace, of the Christian redemption extoling the belief that Christ is the Redeemer to mankind and that Parsifal, hero of Christian Love, exhibits on stage.[846]

Of course, one of the points of inspiration for *Parsifal* to which Italians were often keenest to refer, was Wagner's indebtedness to the music of Palestrina. Again, they were not alone in making this connection given Wagner's public performances, edition of Palestrina's *Stabat Mater*, and writings about the Renaissance composer.[847] The musicologist Sebastiano Arturo Luciani, writing towards the end of the Costanzi's epic run of twenty-two performances, concluded that:

> *Parsifal* is genuine *musica sacra*, the only such music that has appeared in Europe since Palestrina and Bach… Wagner's nature is mystical and sensual at the same time, as it manifests itself in the marvellous, tragic and eternal struggle between spirit and flesh… Thus our epoch, which is both sensual and spiritual, shows a bent towards devoutness, and *Parsifal* satisfies this instinct and unconscious desire in all of us… With this [work] Wagner's dream has come to fulfilment: the public, in the broadest sense of the word, the people, receive the drama in a spirit of religious devotion, as in a ritual.[848]

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[846] La Tribuna, 3 January 1914. (See Appendix 1 Source 42)
[847] James Garrett, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) p. 236.
[848] S.A. Luciani, 'Dopo l'ultima di Parsifal', *Harmonia* (Rome) A II no. 3 pp. 22-23 (22 March 1914), quoted in Katherine R Syer, 'Parsifal on Stage' in William Kindemann, Katherine Rae Syer eds., *A Companion to Wagner's Parsifal* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005) p. 293.

Among those who saw the first Rome Parsifal was Vittorio Gui, to become one of the work's foremost Italian interpreters. He later amplified this connection in a specifically Roman context:

> whoever has had the good fortune to hear the music of Palestrina in the great Cathedral of Rome, cannot have missed forming the powerful analogy of feeling when they then hear, for example, the finale of the third act of *Parsifal*.[849]

Yet even Gui did not feel the need to reference the Lutheran origin (the Dresden Amen) which forms the basis of the polyphony they so admired. It is hard to imagine the Catholic press of 1883 responding in such a way to *Parsifal* at the time its music was first heard in Rome, or for that matter liberal newspapers being quite so sanguine about the obvious Christian and Catholic associations. While much of the tenor of the reception of *Parsifa*l in the Roman press was reflected elsewhere in Italy (and beyond), its musical reliance on polyphonic traditions including Palestrina, its religious ritual and symbolism and its staging of ecclesiastical rites, all found a reflection in the transformed perceptions of religion in opera which had taken place since the beginning of *Roma Capitale*. The music of *Parsifal* was, in this sense, seen as not just particularly Italian, but especially Roman.

The abandonment of formal censorship of opera and the increase in the prevalence of religious themes in the late Verdi operas, the *giovane scuola* and both French and German compositions could be appreciated with a new freedom in the “third Rome”. The modes in which religion was represented on stage, far from undermining conventional religiosity, tended to re-enforce it, even as operatic styles and repertoire evolved. Although the reorientation of opera in the city to the Teatro Costanzi from the traditional aristocratic theatres in the heart of Papal Rome, suggested a preference for bourgeois opera as entertainment, this did not indicate an anticlerical flavour to opera's place in Roman culture. The increasing prevalence on the operatic stage of ecclesiastical rituals, pilgrimages and recollections of a lost

[849] Vittorio Gui, Battute d'Aspetto: *Meditazioni du un musicista militante* (Firenze, 1944) quoted in Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all’Opera vol. 2*, pp. 78-9.

Rome suggest that, as the city modernised, Roman audiences increasingly saw a vision of religious Rome in a positive light. The blurring of distinctions between religious music in opera, and sacred music in a secular setting, for example through performance of oratorio, initially resisted by the Church, facilitated this secular spiritual mode of listening to opera, which made audiences and critics readily appreciative of Wagner's final most religious work, however re-interpreted it was in a Roman context.

Conclusion

Within a year of the production of *Parsifal* in Venice, Italy entered the Great War. Until its tragic conclusion, theatrical life was inevitably moribund. Much like the atmosphere in the years immediately after Unification, when the direction of opera awaited the emergence of musical voices worthy of replacing the ageing Verdi, the post-war years were punctuated by the fading echoes of the *giovane scuola,* while the succeeding *generazione dell'ottanta* forged diverging paths in relation to modernism, and the future path of opera remained unclear among young *novecento* composers following them. Though the genesis and reception of religious themes after the war lies outside the scope of this project, some brief observations will serve to counterpoint this thesis's argument about conditions under Liberal Italy, and highlight contrasts and continuities in the Fascist period.

Within two months of the Allied victory Puccini's *Il Trittico* had its Italian premiere at the Costanzi in Rome. As discussed early in this thesis, the reception of *Suor Angelica* disappointed Puccini who claimed it as his favourite panel of the triptych. Later critics condemned it for religious kitsch or insincerity. Sartori even suggests an atmosphere of anticlericalism put off its Catholic audience.[850] Recent scholarship has emphasised more progressive readings related to spiritualism and the sonics of modernity, but the immediate reception in Italy exhibited uncertainty about the mixture of realist setting and supernatural ending, the wholly-female vocal sound, and judgements of conventionality without drama. The most positive assessment by Alberto Gasco in *La Tribuna* was that, though it left him sceptical, "little by little it conquers through the irresistible nobility of its unfolding… It has a subtle fragrance of roses and incense. It's not a scent which intoxicates, but which calms troubled senses".[851] When the opera opened in Turin in the following April, Andrea della Corte in *La Stampa* dismissed the miracle scene as lacking much musical expression or managing the sense of transcendence which Puccini was aiming for. The opera left him cold.[852] In contrast, *Gianni Schicchi* was heralded as the sunny tonic which post-

[850] Sartori, *Puccini* (Milan: Edizioni Accademia, 1978) p. 312.
[851] *La Tribuna*, 12 January 1919, quoted in Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all'Opera*, pp. 112-3.
[852] *La Stampa*, 26 January 1920.

war Italians, and Puccini's waning reputation, needed after the war.[853] We might add that if the miracle scene in *Suor Angelica* left audiences less than transported, it was now difficult to be believe in such easy visions, particularly for so many mothers who had lost their sons in the War.

Franco Alfano, the oldest of the *generazione dell'ottanta* whose *Risurrezione* had been very much in the style of the 'verismo' school, delivered his own debt to Wagner and *Parsifal* in *La Leggenda di Sakuntala* (1920), both in its musical influences and its focus on an ascetic non-Christian spiritualism.[854] Puccini's own *Turandot* (in which he echoed *Parsifal* in its Act III finale) would only be delivered posthumously in 1926, completed by Alfano. Two years earlier his even older contemporary, Boito, would also have a posthumous premiere at La Scala of his second opera, *Nerone*, whose composition had so tormented Boito for decades. Its sprawling musical structure may not have matched its ambition, as had also been the case with *Mefistofele*, but its themes spoke keenly to the new political moment in Italy*. Nerone*'s splicing of the classical Roman epic with the noble tragedy of the sacrifice of the Christians saw the latter theme more heavily praised.[855]

Of Alfano's younger contemporaries, Idebrando Pizzetti emerged as one of the leading forces in the 1920s. In common with many others of both post-Wagnerian and modernist styles, he considered *Parsifal* the zenith of operatic achievement.[856] In turning away, however, from the mode of the *giovane scuola*, Pizzetti also rejected modernism, preferring a progressive style which looked back to the recitative of Monteverdi for its declamatory vocal lines and Italian polyphonic tradition for its choral textures. *Debora e Jaele* was premiered on 16 December 1922, three months after the March on Rome and was considered a landmark work.[857] The adaptation of the story from the Book of Judges, which Pizzetti made himself after exhausting his dysfunctional partnership with D'Annunzio, also exhibits striking echoes from the

[853] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, pp. 182-184.
[854] Dryden, *Transcending Turandot*, pp. 45-46.
[855] Guido Gatti (trans. Theodore Baker), *'Boito's Nero'*, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (October 1924), pp. 596-621.
[856] Ildebrando Pizzetti, *Musica e Dramma* (Milan: Edizioni della Buzzola, 1945) pp. 224-233.
[857] It was conducted by Toscanini, with Giulia Tess singing Jaele and Debora, Elvira Casazza.

practice of the earlier period. Pizzetti used the Biblical frame to project a contemporary religious focus, suggesting a Christian piety and human justice through Jaele in contrast to Debora's divine judgement. If *Schicchi* appealed to Italians' need for a sunny, yet cynical, commentary on their character and traditions including the famously greedy friars, *Debora e Jaele* exhibited an austerity which repurposed Renaissance Italian techniques in a muscular operatic vocabulary without attempting the realistic effects of the *giovane scuola*.[858] The young Jewish composer, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, also suggested that his friend Pizzetti was influenced by Jewish music in his score.[859] How should such works be read in the new phase of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State? Under the Fascist regime, with which Pizzetti ingratiated himself, the treatment of religion might be viewed as supportive of the national project for regeneration in a way which was impossible to read the religious themes in opera under Liberal Italy. Yet Fascism's relationship to the Church was highly ambiguous, even after the Lateran Pact of 1929. [860] Similarly, its attitude towards musical currents, both modernist and progressive, was not clear cut.[861] A more explicity propagandistic work was *Il Deserto Tentato* (1936) by Pizzetti's contemporary Alfredo Casella, extolling the triumph of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. It claimed a spiritual purpose in returning opera to the traditions of the mediaeval mystery plays, but was shorn of Catholic symbolism, focusing instead on the triumph of military technology.[862] Many of the *novecento* generation like Luigi Dallapiccola largely avoided opera, but a different path focusing on choral music in the music of Godfredo Petrassi could also be purposed for the regime, at least until some artistic supporters balked at the Ethiopian conquest and the introduction of the Racial Laws in 1938.[863]

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[858] Despite the critical consensus that the friars are rightly condemned, a more generous interpretation is possible, if we discount the spin of the avaricious Donati family, the monks are probably all that stands between the poor of 14th century Florence and starvation.
[859] Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, '*Debora e Jaele* del Pizzetti alla Scala', *Musica d'oggi*, vol. 5. No. 1 (1923): pp. 1-6.
[860] On the ambiguity within Fascist regime's relationship with the Church see, Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato*, pp.166-277; J. Pollard, *The Vatican and Fascism 1929-1932 A Study in conflict* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985).
[861] Earle, *Musical Modernism*, pp. 132-193.
[862] Basini, 'Alfredo Casella and the rhetoric of colonialism', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 127-157.
[863] Alessia Macaluso, Fascist Disenchantment and the Music of Gottfredo Petrassi (York University, Toronto: unpublished PhD Thesis, 2017).

Despite these potentially nationalistic readings of religion in new operas under Fascism, the continuing popularity in the repertoire of works discussed throughout this thesis, would suggest considerable continuity in their reception among Catholic audiences.[864] While the regime's supporters like D'Annunzio and critic Fausto Torrefranca focused on the nationalistic potential of art, the 'everyday' experience of theatre-goers, or the new generation of radio-listeners to opera, would still hear to the canon of operas written before and after the Risorgimento which, as this thesis has argued, consistently foregrounded very conventional religious tropes, and used consistent musical devices to illustrate them, in which Catholics could recognise their style of worship and orthodox religious piety. In different cities across Italian patterns of historical and cultural allegiance, exchange and religious identity stimulated particular responses to opera's engagement with religion, from Turin's particular interest in the supernatural, to Venice's pride in its independence from secular and religious domination, to Rome's enduring exhibition of the recent Catholic tradition. The 'official, bourgeois' anticlericalism had been little reflected in religion's significance in opera during Liberal Italy. Once the Church's continuing resistance to ecclesiastical stagings was finally extinguished in the 1890s, it tended to support religious dramatisations, reflecting their general popularity among audiences. Debates about the purpose of art and opera further positioned religious and sacred content as an elevation for the art form, influenced partly by Wagner, which was appreciated by liberal and Catholic observers alike, so that when opera found itself "avanti a Dio" as Tosca declaims on the parapet of Castel Sant' Angelo, God's judgement might well have been benign.

[864] For example in 1938 you could see in Venice and Rome, as well as Strauss and Pizzetti, *Faust* (Gounod), *Manon* (Massenet), and Verdi's *Don Carlo*.

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Appendix – Primary Source Material

Source 1 – *La forza del destino*, Act II Finale

La gran porte della chiesa si apre. Di fronte vedesi l'altar maggiore illuminato. L'organo suona. Dai lati del Coro procedono due lunghe file di Frati con cerei ardenti, s'inginocchiano alle due parte. Più tardi il Padre Guardiano procede Leonora in abito da frate, chi s'inginocchia al'piè dell'altare, e da lui piamente riceve la Comunione. Egli la conduce poi fuori della chiesa, seguito da' Frati, che gli si schierano intorno…

Source 2 – *Don Carlos* (1867) Act II Scene I

Le Chœur des Moines:
Charles-Quint, l'auguste empereur,
n'est plus que cendre et que poussière.
Et maintenant, son âme altière
est tremblante aux pieds du seigneur!

Le Moine:
Il voulait régner sur le monde,
oubliant celui dont la main
aux astres montra leur chemin.
Son orgueil était grand, sa démence
profonde!

Le Chœur des Moines:
Charles-Quint, l'auguste empereur,
n'est plus que cendre et que poussière.
Que les traits de votre colère
se détournent de lui, seigneur!

Le Moine:
Dieu seul est grand! Ses traits de flamme
font trembler la terre et les cieux!
Ah ! Maître miséricordieux,
penché vers le pécheur, accordez à son âme
la paix et le pardon, qui descendent des cieux.
Dieu seul est grand!

Le Chœur des Moines:

Charles-Quint, l'auguste empereur,
n'est plus que cendre et que poussière.
Seigneur, que votre colère
se détourne de lui.
Dieu seul est grand!

Source 3 G. D. Bartocci Fontana, *Mala Pasqua!* (1890) by Stanislao Gastaldon

CORO
Son qua! Eccoli qua!

BRASI
In ginocchio!

(Tutti si dispongono in ginocchio in due file che dalla prima quinta a sinistra vanno fino
alla porta della chiesa. In mezzo alle due file si svolge una modesta processione campagnola. Fanciulli e fanciulle vestite di bianco entrano precedendo il baldacchino retto da popolani; attorno al baldacchino pochi sacerdoti e notabili; molto popolo segue la processione. Giunto il baldacchino avanti alla porta della chiesa, suonano a distesa le campane e l'organo intuona un preludio sacro. — A poco a poco dietro la processione tutti entrano in chiesa).

CORO
O Signore, gli schiavi redenti
palpitanti si volgono al Re!
ma i dolori dei cuori fidenti
tutti aduna ed accoglie la fe'
e li porta sull'ali dei venti
come incenso, Signore, per te!

Benedici la messe che bionda
si reclina sul fragile stel.

Benedici la calma dell'onda
che rispecchia l'azzurro del ciel
e, propizio a la pace feconda,
benedici la cuna e l'avel!

(tutti entrano in chiesa e la scena rimane deserta).

Source 4 - Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci, *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni (1890)

CORO
(interno della chiesa)
Regina coeli laetare.
Alleluja!
Quia quem meruisti portare.
Alleluja!
Resurrexit sicut dixit.
Alleluja!

SANTUZZA, LUCIA E CORO ESTERNO
sulla piazza
Inneggiamo,
Il Signor non è morto,
Ei fulgente
Ha dischiuso l'avel,
Inneggiam
Al Signore risorto
Oggi asceso
Alla gloria del Ciel!

CORO
interno della chiesa
Ora pro nobis Deum.
Alleluja!
Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria.
Alleluja!
Quia surrexit Dominus vere.
Alleluja!

Tutti entrano in chiesa tranne Santuzza e Lucia.

Source 5 - G. Monleone, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Dramma lirico in un prologo e un atto, musica di D. Monleone (Milano: Puccio, 1907) (Inno della Risurrezione)

(Cosi in questo mattino di Pasqua tutte le cose sembrano coprirsi d'inusitata beatitudine. Salgono su dai prati recondite fragranze… È Pasqua!
Ogni cuore palpita di giubilo, ogni anima crede in Dio; l'inno della Resurrezione s'innalza solenne e glorioso nella festa degli uomini e della primavera)

Coro:
Ne' cieli esultanti - d'angelici cori
Un inno eccheggiò
Tra un nimbo di fiori - sull'aure odoranti
Gesù s'involò.
Fanciulle, adornate - di rose le chiome!
Risorto è il Signor!
Fanciulle, invocate - l'altissimo Nome!
Sia Fede, sia Gaudio,
Sia Pace, sia Amor!

Santuzza
Per quel Dio ch'è sceso or all'altare,
o compar Alfio, Lola vi tradisce

Il Popolo (dalla chiesa)

O rex aeterne Domine,
Rerum creator omnium,
Qui eras ante saecula
Semper cum Patre Filius,
Qui mundi in primordio
Adam plasmasti hominem,
Cui tuae imagini
Vultum dedisti similem;
Qui crucem propter hominem
Suscipere dignatus es,
Dedisti tuum sanguinem
Nostrae salutis praetium;
Quaesumus, Auctor omnium,
In hoc paschali gaudio
Ab omni mortis impetu
Tuum defende populum!

Source 6 - ***Mala Pasqua!*, Act I *Preghiera***

Carmela:
Tutto è gioia d'intorno! Io piango sola!

(Dopo un po', volge gli occhi in alto, vede l'immagine e, come inspirata, lentamente s'inginocchia).

O benedetta Vergine,
che leggi dentro a cuori,
che sai tutti gli spasimi,
che sai tutti i dolori,

tu che raccogli il gemito
di tutte le creature
ed hai clemente un balsamo
per tutte le sventure,

pel santo sacrificio
di Cristo in agonia,
scendi benigna Vergine
dentro a l'anima mia!

Guarda il martirio orribile
d'una povera donna,
fammi morire... uccidimi!
Madonna mia... Madonna!

(Carmela rimane prostrata davanti alla immagine)

Source 7 - *Mese Mariano* (Inno)

Alla nobile e ornata signora,
Che rifulge per cor così eletto,
E che ancora una volta ci onora
Torni grato il presente sonetto

Tutti, tutti, ogni bimbo, ogni suora,
Ci sentiamo la gioia nel petto!
Oggi e lieta la nostra dimora!
Oggi è giorno di gaudio e d'affetto!

Splende il sol! Sulla terra ogni fiore
Si colora, ed olezza ancor più!
E, dal Ciel, il Divino Creatore
Tutti noi benedice quaggiù!

E con noi benedice il fervore
Della vostra pietosa virtù!

Source 8 - *La Figlia di Iorio*, Act I

Aligi:
Laudato Gesù e Maria!
E voi, madre che mi déste
questa carne battezzata,
benedetta siate, madre.
Benedette voi, sorelle,
fiore del sangue mio.
Per voi, per me, la croce mi faccio
in mezzo al viso dove non passi
il falso nemico né morto né vivo,
né fuoco né fiamma,
né veleno né fattura…

Candia:
Carne mia viva, ti tocco la fronte
con questo pane di pura farina.
Io ti tocco la fronte che sia chiara,
ti tocco il petto che sia senz'affanni…
E che Cristo ti parli e che tu l'oda!

Source 9 - *La Figlia di Iorio*, Act II Il Coro dei Pellegrini

O Maria, su per lo monte'
noi veniamo alla tua fonte
per mondare noi dall'onte
nella grazia tua corrente…
Per noi priega, Virgo degna,
priega Cristo che ne tegna,
che nel cielo si sovvegna
d'esta sua dogliosa gente!

Source 10 - *Il Santo*, Preface

... plasmato in parte da alcuni tratti salienti della vita di S. Antonio il Dottore, non presentai un demone speciale, il Mefisto rigidamente circoscritto nella sua forma alemanno - romantica, bensì una concezione meno determinata, ma per compenso più generica, più varia. A mio avviso sono le diverse suggestioni, sono i multipli aspetti del semitico e poscia latino Diavolo proteiforme, che forse meglio rispondono all' intimo sentimento delle *fantasie orientali* che, prime, anzi coeve a Cristo, glielo hanno contrapposto. Così egli ne giunse attraverso i milleni pel tramite d' universali tradizioni, per consenso di popolari leggende, colla genialità dell'arte medioevale.

Source 11 - *Risurrezione*, Act IV Finale

Dimitri s'allontana lentamente verso sinistra. Katiusha rimane immobile a vederlo partire; poi s'inginocchia, a testa bassa, e prega silenziosamente; I deportati si son venuti man mano raggruppando sulla scena e si inginocchiano, pregando devotamente. Le campane suonano a distesa

Coro: Cristo si è risuscitato!

Katiusha rimane sempre inginocchiata sul davanti, a testa china

Coro: Osanna! Osanna! Osanna!

I deportati si rialzano e si danno I tre baci di rito

Source 12 - *Siberia*, Act III

Improvvisi, dai villaggi circostanti, lontani e vicini, a onde per l'aria, echeggiano stormi di allegre campane in tripudio. Preannunziano la notte della Resurrezione, la notte del Sabato santo. È il tramonto, squillano lontano acute le trombe cosacche delle diverse storie, rullano i tamburi della fanteria verde; un bisbiglio, dapprima indeciso, poi, a poco a poco, in un crescendo quasi sovrannaturale, un clamore strano e confuso di gioia, si eleva alto, alto, da tutta la casa di pena; istantanee brillano a tutte le capanne le lampade della preparata il luminaria, come per un incanto, come per magia; una profonda esaltazione di indefinibile consolazione traspare in tutti; il viso d'ogni condannato dove la paura, la viltà, il delitto, l'odio hanno solcato rughe feroci, si spiana e rispecchia il sentimento della bontà; da tutti i cuori erompe l'esultanza: le braccia, le anime si elevano al cielo, e un grido immenso scoppia alto.

IL GOVERNATORE (appare improvvisamente in mezzo ai condannati e solenne dice con affabilità paterna:) "Cristo è risorto!" (poi, abbraccia il condannato a lui più vicino, lo bacia. Allora tutto è un sussurro di baci e di bisbigli diversi, in tutti i toni, l'espressione di un sentimento profondo, misterioso, indefinibile, il sentimento della fede) "Cristo è risorto! Cristo è risorto!"

Source 13 - ASCT, *Raccolta Atti Municipali di Torino* – Annata 1873, parte I, pp. 200-201

… sulle scene del nostro massimo teatro, che pure è sussidiato dal Comune, si prostituiscano pubblicamente i sacri riti della religione cattolica, alla quale appartengono in grandissima maggioranza i nostri concittadini. Nello spartito di Verdi *La forza del destino* vi ha una scena grottesca nel primo atto in cui i cori cantano indecentemente le parole stesse che i fedeli pronunciano nel fare il segno della Santa Croce. Nel secondo atto poi nel bel mezzo della scena è rappresentato un altare perfettamente conforme a quelli usati dai cattolici pel Servizio Divino e con sovrapposta una Madonna affatto eguale alla santissima immagine cui i Torinesi sogliono da secoli venerare ed adorare in una delle nostre chiese urbane. Nel terzo atto il nome sacro di Cristo viene indegnamente pronunciato in mezzo a quelli di Bacco e di Venere, e finalmente nel quarto atto si fa una ignobile parodia delle elemosine che in ogni tempo si fecero alle porte dei chiostri. Crede molto deplorabile questa introduzione dei riti sul palco scenico, tanto più che gli artisti i quali rappresentano frati portano appeso al cordone un rosario col relativo crocifisso precisamente come si suol fare dai religiosi.

Source 14 - Arturo Graf, 'Pel mio Diavolo e per me', *Gazzetta Letteraria,* no.44, 2 November 1889.

Esiste o non esiste il diavolo?… Ricorderò solo un fatto noto agli storici contemporanei, e lascerò poi che il lettore giudichi come meglio gli torna. In una città di questo mondo, alcuni spiritisti, dubbiosi della esistenza del diavolo, e desiderosi di uscir di dubbio, pensarono di evocarlo per sapere di lui stesso la verità. Lo evocarono dunque una bella notte, e dopo essersi fatto molto pregare il diavolo apparve loro con aria stizzita, e assai male in arnese, e affermò con giuramento che egli non era mai esistito. Ma anche allora forse, com'è l'usanza sua, mentiva.

Source 15 - Rassegna Musicale, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 31 December 1871

un misto di ritmi e canti ballabili, (vera musica di convito) con espressioni soltanto strane, belle in quanto originalmente strane, straghesche, diavolesche, ecc, musica di pura fantasia, senza nè cuore, né grandiosità, (in comparazione di altre molte e assai più belle opere) senza affetto né religioso, né patriotico, né familiare, né individuale: e volendo esser serio ti riesce buffa.

Source 16 - Francesco D'Arcais, Rassegna Musicale, *L'Opinione*, 23 October 1865.

Il Diavolo non era più il diavolo, e nelle interesse della religione era stato trasformato in un negromante. Che interesse abbia la religione a pigliar le difese del Diavolo , davvero io non saprei, a meno che i censori del granduca fossero adoratori di Belzebù la quale che non è improbabile…

Ma che cosa sono Roberto, Beltramo [sic], Rambaldo, Alice, Elena, Isabella, in paragone dei due draghi che volano per l'aria nell'ultima scena del terz'atto. Mi piacciono anche i demoni che strascinano nell'inferno le ballerine… ma i draghi! Oh i draghi… Ah il draghi! Ecco il *non plus ultra* dell'arte. Conosco un tale che va ogni sera in teatro unicamente per vedere questi draghi i quali mandano fiamme dalla bocca e dagli occhi e fanno salti mirabili. Anche a Torino al Teatro Regio avevamo i draghi nel *Roberto il Diavolo*, anzi si dice che mecanate delle belle arte che fu lungo tempo direttore delle massime scene torinesi ed ora trasferitosi a Firenze, ha mani in pasta alla Pergola abbia portati seco questi draghi.

Source 17 - Cronaca Cittadina, *La Gazzetta Piemontese*, 5 January 1870

A nostro credere, soprattutto è sbagliata la parte del Mefistofele. Dell'originale e nuovo e tutto moderno diavolo di Goethe non rimane nulla nel carattere musicale del Mefistofele di Gounod. Quello del maestro francese è sempre il diavolo tradizionale delle scene: un Bertramo traposto in altro ambiente, ma che conserva i lineamenti della sua fisionomia; di quel genio sottile del dubbio, di quell'incarnazione dello scetticismo argomentante che seppe esprimere il gran poeta tedesco, ci pare che non ne rimanga nulla. Gli artisti che rappresentano quella parte aiutano a questo falsamento del carattere mefistofelico: vestono come il diavolo delle azioni coreografiche e dei balli mascherati: rosso e mero, due colori positivi, per dir così mentre il Mefistofele era vestito di grigio, un colore incerto, diremo quasi scettico, ancor esso: non è più il dubbio del diavolo filosofico che tormenta l'intelligenza moderna, è l'affermazione in contrario del demonio cattolico.

Source 18 – Ippolito Valleta, Rivista Musicale, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 3 January 1876

Mefistofele attende l'anima al varco, evoca le sirene. Contro la tentazione del genio di male Faust si difende col Vangelo: la celestiale visione appare e si fa vieppiù splendida: beandosi in essa Faust muore mentre una pioggia di luce e di fiori mette in fuga Satana… Ma il punto culminante dell'epilogo sta in quel splendido coro delle falangi celesti che abbiamo udito nell'epilogo [sic]: l'effetto cresce con l'entusiasmo di Faust e colla rabbia di Mefistofele; ed e dopo un quadro di questa natura che si comprende la potenza dell'arte, e che si benedice all'artista chi svela allo spirito meravigliato il bello come tutte le sue attrattive.

Source 19 - *Il Gazzettino*, 15 April, 1914

si spande per la sala un mormorio sommesso, ma significativo di ammirazione… Mentre si svolge la sacra funzione con una solennità da far impallidire le funzioni della Cappella Sistina, un senso di pietà preme però il cuore del pubblico alla vista di quel povero cristo di Parsifal obbligato a rimanere lì duro impalato come un piuolo e, quel ch'è peggio, senza capire niente di tutto quel po' po' che succede davanti a lui.

Source 20 - ASCV, ACC, 20 June 1901

ha poi poco fiducia nello scopo educativo di questi spettacoli e per farsene un'idea basta vedere il contegno del pubblico alla Fenice e il modo con cui ascolta la musica. Non si lascia udire e non si tollera l'intolleranza altrui, di quelli chi vengono per udire, turbando così *la religione dell'arte* che dovrebbe regnare in quell' ambiente divenuto invece di convegno intellettuale, un diversivo di salotto… Se il Comune volesse fare opera veramente educativa ed istruttiva dovrebbe cominciare a sussidiare il teatro Malibran dove va con più frequenza… dove gli si danno spettacolo indecenti. Si guarda invece al teatro Rossini dove una classa meno ricca vi assiste di solito con corretto contegno e con maggiore vantaggio educativo ed istruttivo.

Source 21 - *La Gazzetta*, 6 April 1871

… Al contrasto fra la mesta funzione e un palcoscenico, ove il giorno primo s'avevano viste danze anche troppo spigliate, e fra il concetto d'una musica religiosa, che trae da fonte ben superiore le sue ispirazioni e gli effetti e quello della musica, che generalmente s'ode nei teatri e che, se anche arieggia ad esprimere il sentimento religioso, non può non trovarsi naturalmente spostata.

Source 22 - *La Difesa*, 28-29 July 1898.

Perosi, tu ha richiamata dinanzi al pubblico la divina Figura di Cristo, ce lo hai mostrato Dio nel miracolo, ed uomo nel suo pianto, che hai accompagnato con melodie tenerissime. Tu hai fatta una predica più sublime della parola stessa! - non è poi estranea ad un teatro la figura di Cristo; la Passione ed I Misteri furono gli inizii del palcoscenico ora degenerato.

Source 23 - *La Difesa*, 25-26 February 1899

il libretto… è una vera profanazione di uno dei più misteriosi libri della Bibbia… quella parola di effuso amore che si svolge ardentissima in quel libro… deve esser presa allegoricamente, non letteralmente, perché letteralmente prendendola, alla parola santa, divina, si corre rischio di dare interpretazione, non già soltanto profana, ma in qualche parte turpe altresì.

Source 24 - *La Difesa*, 5-6 February 1900

in argomento nel quale il principio morale si trova gravemente offeso, noi non possiamo rallegrarci degli applausi con cui un pubblico facile ha salutato l'opera. Anche dal teatro, se non si pretendesse che sia scuola di moralità, almeno si ha il diritto di chiedere che quell' onestà naturale che è il miglior decoro del sentire civile non venga profondamente lesa e maltrattata.

Source 25 - *La Difesa*, 6-7 May 1903

Chi ha concepito questo libretto, volle porre sotto una luce nuova per la scena l'eterna lotta tra I due principii del Bene e del Male… fu messo di fronte non il consueto Mefistofele della Germania e del romanticismo, ma il Diabolus latino e semitico, quale fu contrapposto a Cristo, nel suoi stessi tempi dalla fantasia multiforme degli orientali.

Source 26 - *La Difesa*, 8-9 May 1903

Se egli ha seguito un metodo che si scosta dall'indirizzo della scuola moderna, ci ha pur dato un lavoro ricco di indiscutibili pregi e che rimarrò a suo cuore. Inoltre, vogliamo rilevare il fatto che egli ha voluto cimentarsi in un tema di grandi linea e di significato morale… è tuttavia notevole la significazione che vi è racchiusa e l'aspetto caratteristico della figura di *satana*.

Source 27 - *L'Adriatico*, 6 May 1903

… mentre la moda, capricciosa, sorride alle *Fedore,* alle *Tosche,* alle *Zazà,* a tutte le isteriche e vecchie eroine imbellettate del teatro romantico, il Maestro Ghin scrisse un opera mistica… il poeta mi offrì tema di ispirazione… è assolutamente doveroso incoraggiare il maestro concittadino, il quale è cultore e mecenate dell'arte musicale.

Source 28 - *La Difesa*, 2-3 January 1901

Chi può restare indifferente dinanzi alla scena pastorale del I.o atto in cui si innesta così mirabilmente il sublime canto deli pellegrini, in cui si accoppiano l'immensità della natura e la fede. L'esclamazione di Tannhäuser, che fuggito da Venere e trasportato in quest' aere puro e quasi sopraffatto della divina potenza, cade in ginocchio e grida, 'Onnipotente in Te sia gloria!' corrisponde al sentimento che erompe dall' anima di ogni spettatore. Il luterano Wagner aveva sentito certo il mistico fascino di una delle più belle eroine cattoliche della Germania, della cara santa Elisabetta... Tannhäuser chiude giustamente l'opera con l'invocazione: Santa Elisabetta, prega per me! …le cui bellezze [di Tannhäuser], ripeto, si impongono anche a persone digiune di musica, purché sentano la poesia della natura, e delle arte, e dirò anche l'idea mistica del credente.

Source 29 - *La Difesa*, 15 April 1914

L' ideale cristiano può dare degli esaltamenti, degli estasi anche all' immaginazione dei non credenti od acattolici come avvenne a Wagner, il quale, sebbene abbia infarcito il suo eroe di stranezze e di errori, pure ha dato prova di sentire e di riflettere sugli altri in maniera altissima il misticismo cristiano. Parsifal è un solenne omaggio all' ideale cristiano non solo, ma anche al culto cattolico di un luterano e forse panteista del genio di Wagner.

Source 30 - *L'Opinione*, 11 December 1871

In carnevale all'Apollo avremo *l'Ebrea* e forse anche *il Profeta*, opere nuove per Roma. Ma quando si dice *nuove per Roma*, non significa già che siano tali pel pubblico che ora accorre all'Apollo. Approvo anch'io che i romani possono finalmente udire anch'essi quegli spartiti, ma avrei desiderato che il repertorio della

stagione carnevale-quaresima fosse composto in modo da rendere pure soddisfatta quella numerosa parte di pubblico che è qui venuta dalle altre provincie. All'*Ebrea* ed al *Profeta*, che ormai nessun impresario al mondo può considerare come opere nuove *d'obliggo*, sarebbe stato utile di udire qualche altro spartito di data più recente, ed anche più antica. Perché Roma non sarà la prima a richiamare in vita, per esempio, *la Vestale* o *Ferdinando Cortez* di Spontini?

Source 31 - 'Appendice - Rivista Drammatico-Musicale' *L'Opinione*, 2 November 1871

Io intenderei che la censura vietasse di portare sulle scene un cardinale vivente, di fare allusioni ad ecclesiastici di nostri tempi; ma quando si tratta di personaggi storici, quale è il criterio, quale la legge da cui muove questo divieto?... Non si può ammettere che Roma sia sottoposto, in materia di teatri, ad un regime eccezionale… Se vietate *L'Ebrea*, se vietate Monaldeschi a Roma, li dovete vietare anche nelle altre città d'Italia… E non basta; dovrete bandire dalle scene italiane *Roberto il diavolo* e *Faust* perché vi si vede il tempio e si odono i canti sacri; ed *il Profeta* per la scena dell'incoronazione; e *Giulietta e Romeo* perché vi è un frate; e *gli Ugonotti*, perché nella famosa congiura hanno parte monaci e preti; e *l'Africana*, perché vi è il coro dei vescovi; e *la Favorita*, perché nell'ultimo atto Leonora e Fernando vengono in scena vestiti da frati.

Source 32 - 'Teatri e Concerti: *Mala Pasqua!* al Costanzi', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 11 April 1890

…nella rappresentazione della nuova opera del M. Gastaldon v'e una cosa che dobbiamo deplorare, e che con noi ha deplorato la maggior parte del pubblico, ed è l'indecente parodia di una processione religiosa che si fa nel secondo atto e in cui, sotto il baldacchino, fra torce e sacerdoti figura il celebrante col Santissimo. Detto questo, quantunque senza speranza che s'impedisca rinnovarsi di tale profanazione; ecco due parole di cronaca della serata… In complesso, un successo che non crediamo possa durare, data la leggerezza della musica, la poca novità dei motivi, e la nessuna importanza del soggetto dell'opera.

Source 33 - *La Voce della Verità*, 17 April 1890

Le parole colle quali la Voce ha stimmatizzato la rappresentazione teatrale di una processione religiosa hanno prodotto il loro effetto. È il caso di rallegrarsi cordialmente collo scrittore del vigoroso articolo, intitolato *sacrilegio*. E giacché l'ottimo giornale si è messo sulla buona strada, spero avrà la cortesia di accogliere alcune osservazioni.

Con I suoi articoli l'egregia Voce non ha messo il dito sopra una ferita fresca, ma ha toccato una piaga cronica; lo scandalo da essa deplorato con termini cosi risentiti è oramai divenuto un fatto abituale; non v'ha teatro di musica o di prosa, non v'ha stagione ov'esso non si riproduca, ed in condizioni talvolta peggiori. Il libretto della *Mala Pasqua!* non è di quelli che offendano la religione, mentre in tante altre opere che pur si rappresentano quasi ogni anno in Roma, l'insulto al Cattolicismo, l'ingiuria alla Chiesa, costituiscono la forma e la sostanza del dramma. Fra queste opere ben altramente ingiuriose alla nostra fede, possono enumerarsi l'Ebrea rappresentata nella scorsa stagione, gli Ugonotti, il Profeta, le quali opere, da capo a fondo, sono, da un lato che un'invettiva odiosa e calunniosa contro il Cattolicismo, e dall'altro un esaltazione, una glorificazione dell'eresia. Se ogni volta che queste opere vennero rappresentate all'Apollo, all'Argentina e al Costanzi, la stampa cattolica avesse parlato come la Voce ha mostrato di saperlo fare a proposito dell'opera *Mala Pasqua!*, il pubblico forse non si sarebbe abituato e reso cosi indifferente a certi spettacoli.

Le processioni di preti, di frati, di monache, di prelati in pavonazzo, di vescovi in mitria di carta, I baldacchini, le croci, le immagini, gli stendardi, che si vedono sfilare nell' l'Africana, nel Profeta, nell'Ebrea, nel Don Carlo e in molte altre opere, sono oramai diventate cose abituali pel pubblico romano. Nell'Ebrea, per esempio, si è dolorosamente offesi dalle invettive che Eleazaro lancia ai cristiani e al Dio dei cristiani; vi si vede con repugnanza un Cardinale cantare la sua parte si lumi della ribalta, inginocchiarsi suppliche vole e lagrimante ai piedi di un mercante ebreo; la scena della congiura e della benedizione dei pugnali negli Ugonotti sarà artisticamente stupenda, ma non so se vi sia scena in cui il sentimento dei cattolici sia più atrocemente vilipeso e calpestato come in quella, in cui e musica e dramma, cospirano a gettare odio contro la Chiesa ed il clero. Oltre quei melodrammi e quelle opere liriche scritte con intento positivamente ostile contro il Cattolicismo, quante non se ne rappresentano ogni giorno in cui le cose e le persone sacre sono profanate! L'ultim'atto del Conte di Gleichen, per esempio, si svolge nell'interno di una cattedrale e vi si vede un pontefice amministrare il battesimo; nel prologo del Mefistofele si ode la voce del Padre Eterno; nel Parsifal il coro canta le sacramentali parole della consacrazione eucaristica; la popolarissima *forza del destino* si svolge quasi tutta nei chiostri, in mezzo a religiosi, e la parte del buffo è affidata ad un frate che predica Cristo dall'alto di una botte; l'ultimo atto della Favorita ci presenta un frate e una donna travestita da religioso, I quali cantano un duetto d'amore nel chiostro d'un cimitero mentre I frati accompagnanti dall'organo stanno salmodiando nell'interno della chiesa; lo stesso Barbiere di Siviglia è travisato in odio al clero, Don Basilio, il maestro di cappella di Beaumarchais, è quasi sempre rappresentato come un sacerdote, un gesuita, il

quale si presenta in iscena in abito talare, e con questa veste si abbandona ai lazzi e alle caricature della sua parte…

Questi continui abusi e questa continua licenza teatrale hanno demoralizzato il pubblico e lo hanno disposto a subire affronti sempre maggiori. A questa deplorevole condizione degli animi, a questo pravo andamento di cose, più che a proposito sacrilego devesi attribuire lo scandalo testè denunziato dalle Voce. Ma bisogna convenire che su questo tristissimo capitolo, non pochi cattolici, anche fra I meglio intenzionati, hanno già trangugiato il molto e tollerato troppo. Fino a tanto che ad opere come gli Ugonotti, l'Ebrea, il Profeta ed altre le quali dal lato religioso, storico e morale, non sono che un continuo pieno e formale insulto alla Chiesa, si accorderà il diritto di cittadinanza cattolica; fino a tanto che la buona stampa non troverà contro di esse e tante altre simili, almeno una minima parte di quel torrente d'eloquenza che la Voce ha lanciato contro la *Mala Pasqua!*, essa si troverà in una posizione piuttosto falsa, per quanto lodevole sia lo zelo che in questa o quella occasione va dimostrando. 'Un assiduo'.

… anche se contiene giudizi severi sul contegno della stampa cattolica verso I teatri; e l'abbiamo pubblicata, perché non rifuggiamo da alcuna responsabilità.

Source 34 - 'Arte Musicale: Gli Oratori di Perosi', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 December 1898

Non vi nascondiamo il desiderio che nei successivi Oratori, facciate uno sforzo di sottrarvi completamente a quella frase suggestiva, triste, melanconica, che come la Spada di Damocle incombe inesorabile su tutta la musica di moda, e all'influenza wagneriana per quanto si riferisce all'istrumentazione, le cui sonorità vengono pur troppo adoperate e abusate tanto per la Marcia di Sigfrido, che per le debolezze di Manon, o per quel pupazzona d'Iris!

Source 35 - *La Tribuna*, 6 December 1898

La musica del Perosi possiede larghezza nel fraseggiare, austerità di condotta, decisione ammirabile di concetti… e ha un indirizzo proprio, e molto debbono essere meditati gli intenti che guidano il suo caratteristico ingegno; tuttavia non ha avuto quel successo che si sarebbe meritato.

Source 36 - Archivio Capitolino, Atti del Consiglio Comunale (ACC), 19 December 1898

Roma a niuna città può esser secondo, quando si tratti d'onorare un genio italiano, ed egli spera che il Consiglio vorrà associarsi nel tributare encomio al giovane e già illustre maestro. Il Presidente risponde che dalle adesioni dei consiglieri, su tutti I banchi, si rileva come unanime sia l'attestazione di stima a chi sa tenere in alto il nome italiano in patria, e lo terrà anche all'estero; e prende impegno di scrivere al maestro Perosi, partecipando il plauso del Consiglio comunale di Roma.

Source 37 - *Il Messaggero*, 16 January 1900

Il Te Deum con cui si chiude felicemente il primo atto è una genialissima trovata del Puccini. Il canto liturgico, il forte inno cristiano – con accompagnamento d'organo di campane e di orchestra – si eleva alto, alato, acquista una pienezza strana, una sonorità una estensione mai udite. … Ammirata assai la messa in scena veramente sfarzosa e il corteo religioso nei variopinti costumi… accolto dalle acclamazioni entusiastiche del pubblico che ne volle la replica.

Source 38 - *La Vera Roma*, 21 January 1900

Hanno voja a cantà 'sti libberali
e chiamacce retrogridi e codini,
basta a sintì la Tosca de Puccini
pe' dije che so' sbaji madornali!

Che lavoro d'orchestra e de violini,
che motivi gustosi e origginali!
Però li mezzi mejo, li più fini
So' stati proprio quelli crericali.

Puccini ch'è 'n artista, un bon'amico,
pe' vede tutti quanti entusiasmati,
Ha dovuto ricorre ar tempo antico!

Li pezzi ch'ânno fatto più impressione
defatti, fijo mio, quali so'stati?!
Tre: Campane, Te-Deum e Pricissione!!

Source 39- Cilea, Gloria, Act III Finale, Gloria's suicide aria

O Madre del dolore. Donna della pianta,
nella grand'ora bruna,
tra le pieghe del tuo lucido ammanto
l'anime nostre aduna,
ricongiunte da nodo anche piú santo…
e benedici a chi vita rifiuta,
e, morendo, tramuta
odio mortale in sempiterno amore!

Source 40 - *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 January 1908 (G.A.)

quale sarebbe si potuto svolgere nell'antica Roma in un vico deserto della Suburra, o nella terza Roma in una stradetta solitaria fra due affiliati alla mala vita che si azzuffano e che si accoltellano per una femmina perduta… Non possiamo cioè non deplorare ancora una volta che il D'Annunzio nella trattazione dei suoi episodi, che in molti punti si rassomigliano un po' troppo al loro, e che hanno purtroppo uno scopo tutt'altro che educativo e morale ponga la mano audacemente sulle cose più sacre e venerande…

Source 41 - *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 January 1914

Nel Parsifal furono riassunte tutte le manifestazioni del cristianismo, la gioia estatica dell'anima e le sensazioni mistiche dei riti cattolici… Nel Parsifal si eleva un concetto divino che attraverso la più grande saggezza tecnica e ideale diviene un inno di redenzione che si slancia verso l'azzurro eterno, coronando il trionfo di Sigfrido slanciato verso il Dio… Il Cristianesimo proclama la divinità della formula: La gioia è dolore perché il dolore è gioia, e per esultare l'Uomo Wagner riprese questa formula e scrisse il suo domma cristiano… E Parsifal e veramente la trasfigurazione di Sigfrido…

Source 42 - La Tribuna, 3 January 1914

… Wagner, sceneggiando I misteri della fede cristiana sarebbe forse riuscito col suo genio, coi canti e le armonie fascinose disposti intorno alla visione drammatica, a sciogliere il dubbio che insidia anche l'animo del credente, e avrebbe tratto, per virtù suprema della sua arte, I miscredenti a provare la sensazione indefinita del sogno mistico… Già il preludio, che fu definito a causa dei suoi temi melodici che le raffigurano, il poema sinfonico delle tre virtù teologali, Fede Speranza e Carità, vi immette nella disposizione di spirito adatta allo spettacolo mistico. E questo, si svolge, esteriormente, come le sacre rappresentazioni di un tempo, meravigliose allo sguardo, significative al pensiero. Gli apparecchi e le trasformazioni sceniche dei misteri cristiani, gl'incantesimi dei misteri antichi si rinnovavano. Gli spettatori ne uscivano allora pieni di meraviglia o di spavento… Volendo celebrare il mistero della grazia, della redenzione cristiana egli esalta il sentimento che fu di Cristo Redentore fra gli uomini e che Parsifal, eroe di carità, impersona sulla scena.